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COLLECTED ESSAYS
OF W. P. KER

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OF

W. P. KER

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

CHARLES WHIBLEY

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME II

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XXI

PASCAL

THE ray of Pascal's genius was one of the keenest which have flashed across dark places. It shone in science first, then threw a light, fateful if distorting, on the morals of a great society ; and then it travelled into the recesses of the heart and mind and soul, where it is still shining. For in the *Pensées*, through the guise of his time and creed, he lives and speaks to us vividly. Whatever may be the fate in store for him, it is not likely that his readers, who increased vastly in the last century, have much diminished in the last few years. So it is not a question of exhuming him for his tercentenary, nor is there much fear that dutiful celebrations may stifle him.¹

The language of his heart is persuasive, and the unflinching light of his mind does not leave us as we were ; yet we may accept or reject his message. There are those whom it consoles and fortifies, and those to whom it only seems to reveal an abyss of contradiction and darkness. His own life makes a strong impression of contraries or disparates. A great mathematician and a master of the strictest logic, he is also master of a subtle and animated prose which belongs to another order ; and these effects can be so diverse that there seem really not to be two gifts, but two minds in him.

¹ June 1923.

He learned the ways of the world, rejected them, and became an ascetic ; yet having expelled brooms from his abode as superfluous things, he invents—if we may call him its inventor—that convenience of modern life, the omnibus. It was while he was living only for his faith and judging by no lighter standard that he wrote enthusiastically in a letter about *l'honnêteté*—the fine and purely human culture of the world ; and then also, when he had carried self-renouncement to its extreme, that a sharp assertiveness came out in his last scientific controversy.

So, if we try to call up the man, diverse images present themselves. One sees him in youth, on fire with intellectual ambition, a swift and peremptory talker ; or at a loss as he first goes into the world, and then an amateur of society—he could not have been more than an amateur—but still delightedly absorbed by it. Then, having retreated to the “ Messieurs de Port-Royal ” in their secluded valley, he is discoursing by request on Montaigne and Epictetus to the innocent M. de Sacy, who listens, a little disconcerted, to this redoubted philosopher. Or we may see him as he lived in Paris in his last years, devoted to an absolute simplicity and charity, working at a great Apology in such time as illness vouchsafed him. Thus his contemporaries may have seen him by turns as a savant, a man absorbed by the graces of the world, and a saint who lived for his religion ; and Pascal, too, may have beheld himself as they did. We all, he says, project an imaginary being in front of us ; we see ourselves as others see us or as we fancy we are, and our real being is something that we never think of. He concludes at last that the self—the ego which insists on being the centre of its world—is odious. And his

emphasis shows how strong that assertive ego was in him. The whole of his life might be called one long effort to find a harmony between instinct, mind and spirit, and in doing so to find the secret of his being. In his life the solution which he found looks more like an exclusion than a harmony; yet nowhere did he express himself more completely than at the end, in the *Pensées*.

After all, what is life but a contradiction? Pascal saw and exposed with an unmatched incisiveness the duality of human life and human nature. Man is a reed, but he is a thinking reed, and all his dignity lies in his consciousness. We show our greatness when we know our misery, which is something that a tree cannot know. Yet we are bound to seek our happiness, and by a last infirmity which is the noblest we covet glory. With a phrase or an image, like his *misère d'un roi dépossédé*, Pascal argues more cogently for the Fall than a host of theologians. There is a flaw and a splendour in creation which make us "feel that we are greater than we know." But Pascal, while he had a lucid sense of progress, looks back rather than forward by his creed. The fate of individuals, like free will itself, was balanced on the razor-edge of Jansenism. And if it were not proved that this doctrine, like the Calvinist, could steel the will so firmly, the thought of that minute, uncertain company of the chosen and the millions who were left to darkness might well have led only to despair.

Yet he seems never to have been a sceptic, as we use the word in questions of faith. The vision of him as harassed to the end by intellectual doubts is another *être imaginaire*, perhaps, coming from the inverted sympathy which makes people want to see another as

themselves and dramatise the likeness, and due in this case to the Romantics who rediscovered Pascal and wished to find in him their own incertitudes. His doubts were rather of his fate and his own nature, and how much of it religion might claim, than of religion. Tacitly a Christian from the first, he had that background of a customary and reasonable piety which was a second nature in his century. He was still very young when the austere Jansenist doctrine caught hold of his mind—it just matched his uncompromising nature and his logic ; but it only swayed the whole of his emotions for a little. All the rest of his spiritual journey seems to be a turning of the heart, dubious for a long time, like the advancing and receding waves of a still gaining tide—for it is the way of nature, as he says, to come and go, but to creep onwards—until he reached his definite “conversion.” You may say that the conviction of an intelligence like Pascal’s is a great victory for faith, as it certainly was ; but it is not the adherence of a doubter.

For besides the love of truth he had, what is not quite the same thing, a passion for certainty. In science this may have helped rather than checked his original and exploring gift. It made him resolute to verify. Pascal’s early education was very like Mill’s, as it was a training of the reason carried out by his father ; and since the father was determined that his child’s mind should never be overweighted by knowledge, perhaps it was more rational than Mill’s. Pascal was a youthful prodigy, but not so much of learning as of a free intelligence. There is a famous and apparently true story of his discovering the first thirty-two propositions of Euclid by himself ; and whether he worked them out with his own figures and terms, or

more prosaically stole the book which had been kept from him, it shows what his bent was. At sixteen he had added something to the theory of conic sections ; two years later he produced his calculating machine, after exertions which probably damaged his health for ever, as he said that he never spent a day entirely free from pain afterwards ; and then he turned to physics, and going on from the point reached by Torricelli, he devised the Puy-de-Dôme experiment and wrote the theses which place him among the discoverers. At twenty-five he was in the first rank of *savants* ; and whenever he came back to mathematics it was to advance or initiate something—as, for instance, the theory of probability. But there were two things in the way of the great scientific career which seemed open to him : broken health, and the demands of a hardly discovered moral self, which were to be exacting.

Instead, one might almost say, he became a great writer—for the sake of his religion. That was something he had never meant to be, and a diversion helped him towards it ; but the time in which Pascal gave himself up to society need not be regretted, as it humanised him. He found a whole region of life where geometry counted for very little. Perhaps it was not a region of life so much as life itself ; or life, at any rate, as it could be lived in a society where feeling and intuition had become curiously perceptive. Watching the intricate play of talk and motive, he saw there was a finesse, a comprehension of life and the world, that was as valid as the stern discourse of reason. And as he visits Mme. de Sablé and her friends, lives with men of the world, and reads Montaigne eagerly and deeply, it is as though a new world and a new mind were revealed to him. Without this initiation the *Pensées*

would not have been what they were, and the *Provincials* could never have been written. They, at all events, required something besides the ardour of a convert. It needed a rare finesse to transfuse the tomes of Jansenius and Arnauld's heavy artillery, not to mention the four-and-twenty casuists of Escobar, into those nimble Letters. The *Provincials* can be admired for their method, and they are a wonder of definition ; but it is the literary art and the lively impersonation which seduce you. Pascal plies his inexhaustible Jesuit with all the verve and the last innocence of irony, and while this becomes almost riotous at times and the knowledge has been gleaned for the occasion, he carries out to perfection his maxim that you can speak naturally even about theology. And then, as he fights the ethical issue, his own real interest and the indignant morality of Port-Royal ring out. No doubt he overshot the mark, for he never really understood what casuistry was meant to be, and attributed a conspiracy to the Jesuits of which they were innocent. But, read in the large, the famous *Letters* cease to be a pillory and remain for all time as a protest against relaxed, sophistic morals.

Pascal writes like a modern ; we feel a new swiftness and clarity at once, and a racy naturalness that disappeared from some of his successors. Behind it there was a world of pains ; seven or eight times—once, they say, thirteen times—he rewrote the beginning of a *Provincial*. Some of his confidences, like “ I made it long because there was no time to make it short,” or “ The last thing one thinks of is what should come at the beginning,” have a craftsman's interest. Writing with a purpose always, and hardly esteeming literature as a thing in itself, he treats it chiefly as an art of

persuasion. He has to be judged, in the main, by a book of controversy which he never finished ; and by the *Pensées*, which are largely notes or studies. But he had a view of the art which he fulfils : it was to write as a man should talk, with the whole of himself and no taint of a *métier*. The virtue of his style is the way in which it perfectly mirrors the qualities of his mind : the logic and the feeling. An intensity of some kind seems to quiver in it, yet the changes of tone are very easy. As a mathematician, we are told, he followed the concrete way : and his imagination holds us in the *Pensées* when he writes of the eternal, silent spaces, or the brutality of death, or the absurdities of human justice.

He lives most, there, in a book which, to speak by the letter, was never written. No labours have managed to recover the scheme of it, though there is probably no French classic for whose life and writings so much has been done in the last thirty years by a fine scholarship, and so devotedly, as Pascal's. But if we cannot find the plan, we can find the author. Polemics have died away and there is no interest in seeing him as anything but what he was ; and we can see what became the most vital of all things to him, the core of his religion. It was a personal devotion to a Divine Person, as he utters it in the fragment called the *Mystère de Jésus*—a picture, colloquy, and prayer in one—or in the memorial where he wrote down that vision or ecstasy of a November night which marked, if any one thing did, his conversion. In the lines of the *Pensées* or between them, one can read what brought him there : his sense of the futility of the world, of the insufficiency of science, and the influence of his sister Jacqueline, who counted in

his life as much as a sister did in Renan's. It was a religion of the heart, tempering with a kind of mysticism those stern doctrines of Port-Royal. One might call it his last delectation ; and there, if anywhere, he found happiness. For like the rest of men he pursued happiness, but the self could not give it him, nor any object outside the self ; only something that was at once in him and transcendent. The way in which, through his last years, he followed the highest ideal he could think of, taming his imperiousness and growing in a human charity, makes one feel that he had found his soul.

You may say, however—considering so many of the *Pensées*—at what a cost ! For the vanity of life has seldom been so pictured as it is there, and the remedies hardly assuage it. The picture has a biting truth like La Rochefoucauld's—a truth we can recognise in all those moments when we feel that most of our occupations are futile and that life and death provide no solutions in themselves. And it reaches a further truth than the ironist's, through the heart and a deeper imagination. Pascal is for all or nothing ; but is his absoluteness the last word ? In his uncompromising criticism the pride which he never quite disposed of seems to flash out again ; he is an aristocrat of morals. The self which he declares that we cannot bear to sit down and contemplate is realised by most thorough action. And Pascal's choice of the ascetic way is half a confession that he could not bring all his instincts into unity. Perhaps he feared his own nature ; and in the face of outer nature he was afraid and homeless. For though not all the utterances in the *Pensées* are professions of his own, this feeling recurs with an emphasis which there is no mistaking. Like a man

who should wake on a desert island to which he had been carried in his sleep, he looks out from a corner of the universe on its infinite, mute vastness, and is filled with blankness and dismay. In spite of his criticism of men he is still man-centred, and would take the world, as Sainte-Beuve said, only from the sixth day of creation. From the beauty of nature and its possible message, as from the genial roots of nature in himself, he turned away. For his complete antithesis, perhaps, one might go to Chaucer.

His touch, at the same time, is unwavering and singularly modern as he brings into one view not only the universe and the body of man, but the body of a mite, the tiny worlds all relative, yet each with its own centre, down to imperceptible smallness. The contrast of opposites which was always emerging in one shape or another, between vastness and littleness, man's glory and insignificance, the abstract infinite grasped by his reason and the perishing finite which mocked his desires, Montaigne's scepticism and the positiveness of a philosopher—each of them right in one principle and wrong in their results—was a genuine stimulus to Pascal. He thinks by contraries and beyond them, like Hegel; and his problem is just how to bring the universal and the concrete together. The business of the reason was to define these questions exactly, but he was not deluded into thinking that it could offer any final answer. For truth came not only by deductions, but by intuitive perceptions; and his originality lay in discerning what the share of intuition was, and not ignoring the feelings and the will besides. Pascal never imagined that the philosophers could tell us the secret of the universe; indeed, he rather decidedly spurned their wisdom; yet one looks up

more than one avenue of thought and finds he has been there, and has not lost himself.

But the virtue of the *Pensées* is that while they can be read for an object, they need not be. Certainly, even in their promiscuous state, they are one of the great arguments for religion ; and those who read them so are reading them in the spirit of Pascal. Yet they have been a favourite with sceptics ; even Voltaire, their greatest enemy, is horribly fascinated by them. As with so many books, half their spell lies in what is said by the way. It is in the unforeseen variety of the amazingly diverse treasures that are strewn in them, the pungent suddenness of a trait or reflection ; and so we remember the restless humans who cannot stay quiet in a room, or the nose of Cleopatra, or the death of Cromwell. After all, a desultory reading of the *Pensées* is true to the form in which we have them. If the Apology of which they are the disjointed fragments had been written, it must have been a great book, and one of the very few of its kind which might be read for pleasure ; but it would not be what this one is, a book that can be taken up and dropped at will ; nor, in view of Pascal's classical restraint, would it so have given us the author's image. As it is, it seems the mirror of an individual, sincere, detached, and yet passionate. The curious feature of Pascal is that while he leaves most opposite impressions he can also give the sharpest sense of unity. It comes from the lucid indomitableness of mind and will which enabled him, despite a life cut short in middle age and broken by suffering, to scale one height after another. His desire to excel became a very piercing instrument, and even a virtue. His is among the rarest cases of a life of the mind and spirit lived at each point to the last intensity.

XXII

SPANISH AND ENGLISH BALLADS

ENGLAND and Spain are the two great Atlantic nations looking to the West. They have often and long been at variance with one another, and it would be hardly true to say that there has been any great exchange of ideas and sympathies between them. But many things in their history seem to indicate a sort of unconscious resemblance ; they answer one another at a distance, as the cliffs of the Land's End and the Lizard may be thought to correspond with the strong headlands of Finisterre ; as St. Michael of the Mount in Cornwall " looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold." Milton saw this ; he is fond of the Atlantic ; the island of Britain belongs to the Atlantic—" the Britannic Empire with all her daughter islands about her." But the ocean, in Milton's mind, would be wrongly disparaged if the share of Spain were ignored. The Spanish names in *Lycidas* prove this, and there are other evidences. Where you find " the steep Atlantic stream " in *Comus*, Milton wrote at first " Tartessian stream," from Tartessus—that is, Tharsis, a place in Spain. When he changed this, it was not from any prejudice against Spain, but (probably) because " steep Tartessian

stream " had too many s's in it, and certainly because the name was too particular, and apt to be not understood. He wrote instead of it the right name, Atlantic. This is a very fitting place to remember two Spanish poems of Atlantis—*La Atlantida* of the Catalan poet Jacinto Verdaguer, and the *Atlantida Conquistada* of my much honoured friend Leopoldo Diaz.

In the prose history of these coasts there are many resemblances between England and Spain. I think especially of the captains' reports about 1587 and 1588, collected and published in Duro's *History of the Armada*. The Spanish cruisers were too familiar, the English may think, with Mount's Bay and the Longships and the Scillys, but there is a great natural likeness between their stories and the narratives in Hakluyt—Hakluyt, whose debt to Spain has been so well estimated by Mr. Foster Watson in the *English Historical Review*. It is curious to think, too, of the poets who went voyaging. The Spanish poets were more thorough and went further than the English, who have no one on their side to match the heroic author of the *Araucana*, for the extent either of his travels or his poetry, "on that vast shore wash'd by the furthest sea"—though we remember Thomas Lodge and his *Rosalind, Euphues' Golden Legacy*, written at sea under Cavendish; while Donne's "Island Voyage" to the Azores with his poems of the *Calm* and the *Storm* might be compared with Lope de Vega's share in the Armada.

The Spanish and the English drama, the plays of Lope and Shakespeare, have often been compared, and affinities traced between them. Too much may be made of superficial resemblances. That the Spanish and the English theatre should in practice neglect the unities does not of itself make any essential likeness

between them. But the resemblances are there, often quaint and surprising, as when Spain and England suddenly at the same time discovered that quadrangular courtyards were obviously meant for theatricals. The history of the early extempore theatre in Spain and England is all one, in idea, and historians use the same language of each country, describing how the stage was rigged up on one side of the courtyard, how the windows on three sides overlooking the yard were made to serve as boxes, how the vulgar occupied the ground in the middle. It is amusing, again, to find the Spanish and the English playwrights in their blank verse agreeing to wind up their blank tirades with a final rhyming couplet. In spite of this and other coincidences the Spanish plays, with their predominant short verse in rhyme and assonance (blank verse only for occasional use), are not really very like the Elizabethan drama. What is really like is the careless, independent spirit that saved both Spanish and English from the tyranny of the Renaissance. Both Spain and England were deep in debt to Italy for instruction in poetry ; but in drama, where the Italian authors had not so much to teach them, both Spain and England refused to accept the Italian authority. This refusal is not a mere negative objection to discipline ; it is lively, original invention, springing free and reaching out for new worlds.

Occasionally something of a salute is offered from the one country to the other. We can hardly reckon Lope's attention to Francis Drake as of this sort. More encouraging is Cervantes in the *Española inglesa*, yet his respect for this country is not exaggerated or hyperbolical. Shakespeare, on the other side, is more appreciative, though he may be thought to have

dissembled his love in his specimen of a Spanish cavalier. At any rate, he knew something about him. Spain, for Shakespeare, was more real than Bohemia or Illyria. His spelling shows this. *Armado* appears sometimes as *Armatho*. And Mr. Oman suggested many years ago that *Moth*, his page, is simply, *Mozo*. Don Adriano is introduced in a sonnet spoken by the King of Navarre. By the way, we may notice that this occasional use of sonnet in drama, frequent in Shakespeare's earlier plays, is another point of coincidence between Spanish and English fashions. The sonnet, says Lope in his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, is useful to fill up pauses—*para los que aguardan*. And the King of Navarre in *Love's Labour's Lost* speaks a sonnet and describes Don Adriano de Armado :

... our court you know is haunted
 With a refined traveller of Spain,
 A man in all the world's new fashion planted,
 That hath a mint of phrases in his brain ;
 One who the music of his own vain tongue
 Doth ravish, like enchanting harmony ;
 A man of complements, whom right and wrong
 Have chose as umpire of their mutiny
 This child of fancy that Armado hight
 For interim to our studies will relate
 In high-born words the worth of many a knight
 From tawny Spain lost in the world's debate.
 How you delight, my lords, I know not, I,
 But I protest I love to hear him lie,
 And I will use him for my minstrelsy.

There is, of course, burlesque in this, but there is also a sense of the heroism and the chivalry of Spain. "The world's debate"—does this not mean the war of Christendom against the Infidel? Dr. Johnson thinks it does not refer to the Crusades particularly, but to the general tumult of the world. Dr. Johnson was

dead before the last volume of Gibbon was published, with the magnificent sentence at the end of the chapter on the Crusades :

By command of the Sultan the churches and fortifications of the Latin cities were demolished ; a motive of avarice or fear still opened the holy sepulchre to some devout and defenceless pilgrims, and a mournful and solitary silence prevailed along the coast which had so long resounded with the WORLD'S DEBATE.

Shakespeare knew something, from Chaucer it may have been, or from Lord Berners' *Froissart*, of the wars of Spain against the Moors :

In Gernade at the siege ech hadde he be
Of Algezir . . .

he might have read in *Froissart*, among other things, the story of Douglas and the heart of Bruce.

We may be allowed to take it as good auspices for the Anglo-Spanish Society that Shakespeare should have recognised the glory of Spain in that older warfare where Chaucer's knight and the Black Douglas had their share.

The World's Debate and its minstrelsy include the matter of many Spanish ballads, from the Cid and the old time before him to the *romances fronterizos*, the border ballads of raids and forays in the marches between the Spaniards and the kingdom of Granada.

The Spanish and the English popular ballads are related somewhat like the Spanish and English plays of the time of Shakespeare. There are resemblances and analogies ; there is no direct real traffic from one side to the other.

Among the correspondences we may reckon the way ballads are admired in England and Spain even by

persons of correct or classical taste. We all know the fervent words of Sir Philip Sidney about the old song of Percy and Douglas ; how his heart was moved more than with a trumpet. Spain echoes this, not many years after Sidney's death, in the *Arte poetica* of Juan Diaz de Rengifo (1592), a very sensible writer on the measures of Spanish verse. Speaking in his fifth chapter of the dignity of the art, he touches, of course, like Sidney and all the old rhetoricians, on the instruction to be found in poetry. Salutory counsels are impressed on the heart and memory through verse ; better still, when they are sung to music. " Who," says he, " has not experienced in himself what emotions are awakened in his heart when he hears the singing of one of the old ballads in vogue on the history of Zamora and other sorrowful events ? Which, if he were to hear recounted in prose, doubtless they would not move him so."

This Spanish author is more secure than Sidney in his praise of the ballads, for Sidney tries to imagine what *Chevy Chase* might become with the style of Pindar ; the Spaniard is content with the ballads as they are. He does not try to run them against the more learned and literary forms, like Molière's *Alceste* ; on the contrary, he greatly admires the finest art of the Italian poets and their Spanish imitators. But he has room for the ballads as well, and does not wish them to be improved into something different.

Ballad poetry is as far as anything in the world from the ordinary practical objects of human activity. Nothing can well be less useful than the study of ballads ; it is a pursuit of dying echoes, the fashion of the old world that passes away and leaves hardly a trace on modern life. You will not find any ballads in

Ettrick or Liddesdale where Scott found them a hundred years ago, except as you might find them in this room among readers of the *Ballad Book*. The ballads died out after Scott printed them. Old Mrs. Hogg put the blame on Scott himself. She was just at the end of a long tradition; she had a fine memory for ballads. Her reputation and that of her son, the Ettrick Shepherd, have been vindicated by Andrew Lang in one of his latest essays on ballad poetry. James Hogg, no doubt, was capable of anything in the way of practical poetical jokes. But in the days of the Border Minstrelsy Hogg was working as a scholar and a critic to help Scott. Read his letter to Scott of June 30th, 1802. The publisher of Scott's letters has left out Hogg's list of ballads and songs as not likely to interest his reading public; but the letter proves Hogg's genuine interest in the work of collecting. This is the story of one of his failures. His uncle knew many ballads, but his uncle was too religious.

“ ‘My uncle!’ said I. He is, Mr. Scott, the most incorrigible man alive. I cannot help telling you this—he came one night professedly to see me and crack with me, as he said. Thinking this a fair opportunity I treated him with the best the house could afford, gave him a hearty glass, and to humour him talked a little of religion. Thus I set him on, but good L—d! had you heard him, it was impossible to get him off again. In the course of his remarks he had occasion to cite Ralph Erskine. Sundry times he'd run to the dale (*i.e.* shelf) where the books lay, get the sermons and read near every one of them from which he had a citation. What a deluge was poured on me of errors, sins, lusts, covenants broken, burned, and buried, legal teachers, patronage, and what not! In short, my dram

was lost to my purpose. The mentioning a song put him in a passion."

The romance of *Auld Maitland* was accurately written down by the Ettrick Shepherd from the accurate recitation of his mother. There is no doubt of that now, for she repeated and her son wrote down words, the right words, which they did not themselves understand. They are trustworthy reporters of tradition, and they are at the end of it. After them the ballads are heard no longer in that Forest.

Popular traditional poetry has many strange ways of its own. There is a large region that favours ballads ; it includes England and Spain ; it includes also France and Portugal, Piedmont and Lombardy ; Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and the Faröe Islands ; the Northern tongues, of course, having their own peculiarities over against the South. Germany, with a very rich ballad literature, is curiously distinct from what we call the English-Danish region.

Here, while we remember Uhland and *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, let us pay our respect to the great German scholars, Jacob Grimm and Ferdinand Wolf, who (with others) have done so much for the Spanish *romancero*. Their fame is suffering—unjustly—from the Prussian gas which was invented since that day. Their countrymen, who have ruined many sanctuaries, have not spared the graves of their fathers. But the students who are indebted to Jacob Grimm and Ferdinand Wolf will not allow themselves to be bullied into ingratitude. As for the felons, they may be left to themselves : to look at the good estate from which they have declined :

Virtutem videant, intabescantque relictæ.

Traditional poetry, of course, includes everywhere many forms that are not ballads. Some nations seem to have no liking for ballads, though they may be rich in other kinds of song. The Tuscan popular poetry does not attend to stories ; it is lyrical purely. This seems to hold of all Italy south of the Apennines. There are also people who get on comfortably with no traditional poetry at all. Such is Ettrick since the Shepherd and the Last Minstrel died. The Dutch in South Africa seem to have no folk-tales and no ballads, though the ancestral Netherlands have plenty of popular traditional songs in great variety. Perhaps it may show that the human race naturally craves for ballads, when we find Mr. Reitz, sometime Secretary of the South African Republic, writing African Dutch poetry and including along with his original works a translation from the old English popular ballad of *Vilikins and his Dinah*.

English and Spanish ballads are not very closely related, though the relation improves as it is looked into ; better acquaintance brings the countries closer together, as I hope to show. At first, the Castilian *romancero* seems to offer little but Castilian history in rhyme. The Seven Children of Lara, the Cid and Ximena, King Sancho and his self-willed sister Urraca—they are meant for audiences in Spain ; what have the people of Britain to do with these stories ? The people of Britain have not even any heroic group of their own to compare with the ballads of Castile—unless you admit the *Little Geste of Robin Hood*. It is a curious thing that in this respect Denmark should be liker to Spain than England is ; there is a noble series of Danish ballads on themes of their national history in the Middle Ages. There is something worth con-

sidering in this mode of Danish and Spanish ballad poetry ; it means, I imagine, that both Denmark and Spain had a large number of people, neither great nobles nor simple countrymen, who had a sense for great things, and were able to seize on chances for fresh heroic themes, while they were not impeded by any standards of literary epic or courtly romance. In England, the franklin and the yeoman had their taste in story-telling, but they did not, like the gentlemen of Castile and Jutland, take their ballads very commonly from the lives and deaths of kings and queens. The hero of the yeomanry is Robin Hood ; he is put forward in so many words as the representative of the yeomen. " Yeomanry " is an idea, like chivalry ; it is the same thing essentially :

Herkens, god yemen,
 Comley, corteys and god ;
 On of the best that ever bare bow
 His name was Roben Hode.
 Roben Hode was the yeman's name
 That was both corteys and fre,
 For the loffe of our lady
 All wemen werschepyd he.
 Bot as the god yeman stod in a day
 Among his mery maney,
 He was ware of a proud potter,
 Cam dryfyng owyr the ley.

The virtues of Robin Hood are courteous ; he has the same virtues as Sir Gawain himself. But he belongs to a different order. A comparison of the Cid with Robin Hood will give the difference between Castilian and English ballad poetry with regard to their heroes. Ballad poetry, we may say, takes naturally the same themes as epic. Achilles in contest with Agamemnon is like the turbulent vassals of Charlemagne in the

chansons de geste ; he is also like the Cid with King Sancho and King Alfonso, or like Bernardo del Carpio renouncing his allegiance. The unruly vassal in the Danish ballads has a right to renounce his lord in the same way. Thus, with kings and great men on the scene, the motives of pride, ambition, and jealousy are raised to the heroic pitch. In the English and Scottish ballads the heroes are put to the hardest test, and the poet and his audience live in the motives of tragedy, but the hero is commonly less exalted than in the ballads of Castile. The hero fighting for his life, treacherously beset, is Parcy Reed, a gentleman of Redesdale, or Johnnie of Braidislee, a border laird ; they fall in a private feud. So, also, it may be said, the Infantes de Lara are the victims of private vengeance—the spite of an abominable woman. But the scene is larger, and the treachery is worked out through national, not private, warfare. Their wicked uncle, incited by his wife Doña Lambra, betrays his sister's sons to the Moors ; their father is already in captivity, and it is the Moorish king Almanzor who shows him the heads of his sons. We know that Moors make a good subject for a puppet show ; they became rather cheap in Spanish romance after a time. But there is no denying that the history of the Infantes de Lara takes in more of the pride of life, more of the glory of heroic warfare than the death of Parcy Reed, or the defence of Adam Bell, Clym of the Cleuch, and William of Cloudeslie. The children of Lara are lost in *the world's debate*. Though the stories of Parcy Reed and the death of Robin Hood are as true-born as the Spanish heroic romances, they have not the outward splendour of rank which tells for something considerable in tragic poetry.

This heroic dignity in the ballads of Castile makes them very different from the ballads of the neighbouring dialects. Open, for example, the admirable French ballad book of Doncieux, *Le Romancéro populaire*. This contains specimens from the French region in the largest sense ; it includes Catalan Provençal and Piedmontese as well as French, for all those languages have the same ballads. Now the French ballads are of a different sort from such Castilian romances as are best known. They belong not to heroic tradition, nor to chivalry, nor to chivalrous yeomanry like Robin Hood and Gamelyn. They belong to the land of *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. They are not like the Spanish or the Danish ballads of kings, or the English and Scottish ballads of Percy and Douglas. They are the French counterparts of *Lord Randal*, and *Binnorie*, and *The Wife of Usher's Well*. They are not much like anything in history ; they are not attached to any glebe in particular ; they are of the air, and they travel free over all borders.

Now this vague, unhistorical ballad poetry is generally as sure of its motive as any of the heroic sort, and it is often more wonderful, as *La Belle Dame sans Merci* is more wonderful than any poem with an historical frame to it. This vague sort of ballad, with the lyrical element in it stronger than the narrative, is known also in Spain. Though the historical ballads of Castile take up more room than those of the vaguer tradition, Castile has the song of the Count Arnaldos, the spell of the sea :

Quien uviese tal ventura sobre las aguas del mar
Como uvo el Conde Arnaldos, la mañana de San Juan.

This is the ballad in which the very spirit of traditional

poetry is embodied ; the mariner's song from the elfin ship is the pure magic of all the ballads in the world :

Yo no digo esta cancion sino a quien conmigo va.

This kind of poetry has always, one may say, been well known in Catalonia ; it belongs also to Castile and the Asturias ; and it is found as Scott found the Border Ballads, by going to look for it and listening where the ballads are remembered. In the last thirty or forty years discoveries have been made in Spanish traditional poetry, which still leave much to be published. The Anglo-Spanish Society might help, if it were only by sending a message to Don Ramón Menéndez Pidal to say that it is willing to be interested and to subscribe for the publication of the traditional *romancero* which in manuscript is now extant, waiting for more leisure and a more convenient time. This really, I may say, is the motive of the present discourse. Otherwise I might have had to apologise for taking up so many minutes with a subject apparently so far from all real solid interests. I will admit that my text has little concern for the economic side of this society. But when we remember that a man so eminent for scholarship, so ready to welcome scholars of other lands, is waiting to see his work accomplished, I need not apologise for my choice of a subject. It is intended as a message of regard for him, in which I am sure the whole society will be glad to join. I may say that Don Ramón Menéndez Pidal has lectured for the Hispanic Society of New York ; he has not yet visited London at the invitation of the Anglo-Spanish Society of Great Britain.

I give here one of his stories. I have quoted it before (in a review of the New York lectures), and I

still wonder whether it sounds more like Scott or Cervantes :

In May of 1900 I visited the banks of the Duero to study the geography of the Cid. It was our wedding journey. Our researches were finished at Osma. We waited a day longer to see the eclipse of the sun, and it happened that my wife repeated the ballad of the *Conde Sol* to a washer-woman with whom we were speaking. The good woman told us that she knew it too, along with others which made up her stock of songs as she was beating and washing clothes by the river ; she consented to sing one, and began in a sweet voice a melody as "soothing and agreeable" to our ears as those which the historian Mariana heard with the ballads of the siege of Zamora. The ballad which she sang was unknown to us, and therefore the more interesting ; as it proceeded, my wife thought she found in it a more or less historical argument, an echo of that sorrow, tribulation and sore mischance which, according to the chronicles, was caused in Spain by the death of Prince John, son of the Catholic Kings. And so it proved to be, an historical ballad of the fifteenth century, unknown to all the collections old or new in Spain. It was necessary in the few hours remaining of our stay in Osma to note the music and copy the ballads, the first tribute paid by Castile to our ballad book of modern tradition ; aided by the choir-master of the Cathedral and getting the good woman to repeat her songs we passed the hours, hardly sparing time for the eclipse which was the reason of our staying there, but now had lost its first importance.

The pendent to this is what the same author tells of discoveries in South America, *e.g.* the children's songs that he found in Monte Video, waiting for his steamer.

Those explorations, like Walter Scott's raids in Liddesdale, are part of the Humanities.

Ballads are one form of the memory of the human race—a vanishing memory now, if it were not for such explorers. It is worth while reckoning (only it is beyond all calculation) how much of the soul of Spain

and of England has gone into traditional ballad poetry. The quotation that I have just given (*la lavandera de Osma*) will show something of it ; there is more to tell. The true greatness of Spain can be proved in many ways ; I do not know any evidence more remarkable than the preservation of the Spanish ballads in the oral traditions of the Spanish Jews. They were banished in the year 1492 by the Catholic Kings ; and they took with them, to Tangier and Constantinople, to Bosnia and Salonica, their Spanish language and the Spanish romances. These have been collected and recorded in the last twenty years, and some of them have been published. The exiles might have been forgiven if they had renounced all part in the country which drove them to the Levant. But they kept their language ; they have kept the old Spanish songs ; with a loyalty unexampled, I should say, in any other people ; fanciful, romantic if you will, an intellectual and spiritual allegiance, an instinctive refusal to be dispossessed and disinherited. The Spanish authorities thought they were protecting Spain ; the exiles knew better, and perhaps were happier than they knew. Anyhow, there are the nearly 300 ballads that have been collected among the Spanish Jews, some of those ballads unknown in the Peninsula, while some of them preserve older forms than anything now current in Spain. For example, there is a ballad of the knight returning mortally wounded, like *Le Roi Renaud*. One of the Jewish romances has kept the name of his adversary ; it is Uerco—that is, Orcus ; the knight who comes home dying has wrestled with Death himself.

And England has something to show in comparison with the Spanish ballad tradition in America and the Levant. The English ballad tradition is still going in

America. Mr. Cecil Sharp, who has recovered so many old songs in Somerset, has found much more in the Appalachian mountains, in that strange country on the borders of Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina, which some of us heard about for the first time thirty years ago in the novels of Charles Egbert Craddock. Those mountaineers might possibly have written their own sagas, instead of leaving it to the author of *The Great Smoky Mountain*. But their taste is different ; they hold with the Spanish author of the *Art of Poetry*, Rengifo, that singing is better than prose. This is what Mr. Sharp says :

I found myself for the first time in my life in a community in which singing was as common and almost as universal a practice as speaking . . . In an ideal society every child in his earliest years would as a matter of course learn to sing the songs of his forefathers in the same natural and unselfconscious way in which he learns his mother tongue. . . . And it was precisely this ideal state of things that I found existing in the mountain communities. So closely, indeed, is the practice of this particular art interwoven with the ordinary avocations of everyday life that the singers, unable to recall a song I had asked for, would often make some such remarks as, " Oh, if only I were driving the cows home, I could sing it at once ! " On one occasion, too, I remember that a small boy tried to edge himself into my cabin in which a man was singing to me, and when I asked him what he wanted, he said, " I always like to go where there is sweet music." Of course, I let him in, and later on, when my singer failed to remember a song I had asked for, my little visitor came to the rescue and straightway sang the ballad from beginning to end in the true traditional manner, and in a way which would have shamed many a professional vocalist.¹

Those mountaineers of the Appalachians might be traced by an ingenious antiquary back to William

¹ *English Folk-Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. Collected by Olive Dane Campbell and Cecil J. Sharp. Putnam, 1917, p. viii.

Morris's adventures in search of the *Earthly Paradise*. A correspondent of mine in Washington thinks that they are probably among living men the people most resembling the Icelanders of the heroic age. They are, he says, the most purely British in blood of all Americans.

It is pleasant to think of Spain and England still competing, beyond the Atlantic, in so much that remains alive of their traditional ballads, their "reliques of ancient poetry."

XXIII

DON QUIXOTE

I MAY be allowed to thank this Society ¹ for the honour they have done me, and especially for the opportunity of meeting some old friends, and of acknowledging some old debts to my native town. Before beginning on my proper subject, or speaking directly of Don Quixote and his books of chivalry, I should like to make mention of some things that are commonly ignored or forgotten by strangers in their estimate of Glasgow. Glasgow has a larger share in romance and romantic tradition than most people recognise ; though they have the salmon and the ring in the City Arms to remind them. St. Kentigern, according to some authorities, was the son of Owain ap Urien Rheged, who is called Uwain by Malory ; son of Urien, King of Gore, and of Morgan le Fay ; Owain, the hero of the beautiful Welsh story *The Lady of the Fountain*, the Iwain of Chrestien de Troyes and Hartmann von Aue, and of the English romance called *Ywain and Gawain*. St. Mungo is mentioned in one of the old French chivalrous poems, the romance of *Fergus*, and the same book tells how Sir Percival himself in his wanderings came to the

¹ The Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow.

Forest of Glasgow.¹ One of the chief documents for the life of Merlin speaks of his appearance on the hill beyond the Molendinar burn, uttering his prophecies to St. Kentigern on this side of the stream.² One must not spend too much time in these reminiscences, but before I leave them I would return to the Molendinar valley, and ask whether any place has been more honoured by romance than this, the seat of St. Mungo. I am not thinking now of Merlin, but of the High Kirk as Francis Osbaldistone saw it, of the crypt on that Sunday, and of the warning of Rob Roy. There is an imaginative, a spiritual city of Glasgow to be found in the books of different romancers and historians ; it is not all vanity.

In addressing a philosophical society one naturally thinks of consulting the philosophers ; Hegel has given his opinion about Don Quixote, and with that I shall begin. It occurs in one of the liveliest passages of his works, the discussion of romanticism in the *Æsthetik*. One must remember the vogue of the German romantic school in Hegel's day, and also the strong foundation of Hegel's mind in Greek literature. Like Goethe, with whom he is in close sympathy, he is critical of the romantic ideas, and though he feels their attraction he is distinctly not of that party. Shakespeare and Cervantes command his respect ; Cervantes through his likeness to Shakespeare. It is worth pointing out that the characters of Shakespeare named by Hegel are not those we should innocently expect from a

¹ La contree de Landemore
Trespasse tote sans arest,
Et puis s'en entre en la forest
De Glascou qui molt estoit grande.

—*Fergus* ed. Ernst Martin (Halle, 1872) ll. 182-185.

² Cf. H. L. D. Ward, "Lailoken (or Merlin Silvester)," *Romania* xxii. (1893) p. 516.

philosopher. Falstaff is there, but besides Falstaff, Hegel mentions Stephano, Trinculo and Pistol as examples of Shakespeare's power. What he admires most in Shakespeare is what he admires in Dante and in Don Quixote ; the strength of the individual character, the resistance of the character to all outward pressure. Like the people in Dante, like Don Quixote, these are each an intelligence, not argumentative machines (says Hegel) like the noble persons in classical French tragedy.

Don Quixote, in those lectures on literature, comes in after Ariosto ; Hegel is interested in the exploding of medieval romance, and he is careful to show that both Ariosto and Cervantes, in making fun of chivalry, preserve the chivalrous essence under other forms :

" In spite of his comic aberration Don Quixote retains what we praised in Shakespeare ; working in the spirit of Shakespeare, Cervantes has made his hero an essentially noble nature, endowed with a variety of intellectual gifts, never uninteresting. In his craziness he is always sure of himself, sure of his cause ; or rather it is just this sureness which makes his craze. If we had not this unreflecting security as to his actions and their consequences he would not be truly romantic, and this self-confidence regarding his aims and ideas is, all through, great and glorious with the finest touches of character. (1) The whole work is thus, on the one hand, a satire on romantic chivalry, charged with irony through and through, and thus different from Ariosto, whose pleasure in the maze of adventure is in comparison light and careless. (2) On the other hand, the adventures of Don Quixote are only the thread on which, in the most charming way, a number of really romantic tales are strung, as if to bring back in its true

value what the rest of the story with its comic spirit has dissolved." ¹

I cannot find any other philosopher who speaks better sense than this. Dr. Alexander Bain has some remarks on *Don Quixote* not always easy to understand, *e.g.* :

"The ridiculous is clearly overdone in the attack on the puppets; but this passes as satire due to the author's abhorrence of the Moors. Otherwise, it is next thing to childish."

Bain says of Falstaff that "the delineation labours under a superfluity of grossness and coarseness except for the lowest tastes." Perhaps he meant this for Hegel?

Hegel, I think we may say, is more satisfactory here than Bain, and more intelligible. He is also in disagreement with Byron; he does not believe that Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away. This is one of the falsities of Byron; he sometimes spoke without thinking, and when he said this about *Don Quixote* he was not thinking about Cervantes; he had a point to make. Let us see how much value there is in it. It does not, of course, mean that Cervantes put an end to the old-fashioned chivalry; the whole scheme of the book implies that the old chivalry has gone; even the Landlord, who, as Dorothea says, is very fit to play second to *Don Quixote* in his love of romances, even the Landlord recognises that there are no real knight-errants now. It may be remarked here that *Don Quixote* was only about two hundred years too late; the Knight in the *Canterbury Tales* had been a knight-errant, as we all know, and even very practical politicians, like Henry Bolingbroke, may go out on adventures against the infidel. But the fashion of the

¹ Hegel, *Æsth.*, II. p. 214.

fourteenth century, the time of Chaucer and Froissart, was not that of the sixteenth—the older chivalry, which was a much more real thing than many people imagine, was gone, and the whole plot of the book means that it is gone.

If you take chivalry in another sense to mean simply high-flown notions of honour, then it is equally untrue and absurd to say that chivalry was exploded by Don Quixote. The point of honour is more emphatic in the generation of Calderon than it was before ; just as in England the cavalier ideal of Montrose's time is in many respects finer than the Elizabethan ; “ the love of honour, the honour of love ” are wrought into a more piercing flame of inspiration in the seventeenth century. If chivalry means heroism, then I think we know where to find some record of it in Spain after the death of Cervantes. The greatest heroic picture in the world, I venture to think, is the *Lances* of Velasquez, the picture of the Surrender of Breda, in the Madrid museum. Velasquez is younger by two generations ; and it is to him that we must go, to a Spaniard of the decadent age, to see in a picture, in the meeting of the conquering hero and his noble defeated adversary, what is meant by the poets when they speak of deliberate valour.

Byron had an incurable habit of preaching, and allowed himself to be carried away by his moral fervour at the expense of historical fact. The author who, according to Byron, is guilty of his land's perdition—smiling chivalry away, and all the rest of it—was the author of a play called *Numancia*, which was chosen to be acted in Saragossa during the siege by reason of its patriotic ardour. The experiment was successful in its effect on the spirits of the town ; and the resistance

of Saragossa, though it may not prove that the *Numancia* is a good play, at any rate shows that Cervantes was not always a discourager. Byron thinks *Don Quixote* was the saddest book. That certainly was not the author's own opinion about it. He thought it all very good fun.

Don Quixote, to begin with, is a literary burlesque ; not a satire on chivalry, but a gibe at the ridiculous style and the poor commonplace invention of the degenerate prose romances. Some people think of the book as if it were a modern democratic assault on the gentle castles of romance. It is not ; the books of chivalry are the books of all the people ; dear to the great heart of it. Everyone reads them ; the curate knows all about them before he delivers them to the secular arm ; Dorothea reads them, and talks their language when she is in the person of the Princess Micomicona. They are the Tales of my Landlord, as we know well from that familiar passage which has been more often printed than any other Spanish sentence in the world ; and the books which the host would not allow to be "heretical or phlegmatic" were equally loved by his wife and his daughter, and by Maritornes as well. The first notable follower of Don Quixote, the English Knight of the Burning Pestle, is composed in the same fashion as his great original, and his chivalry is the chivalry and the romance that are understood by the Grocer's wife in London, and fitly acted by Ralph the prentice.

The literary and critical views of Cervantes have scarcely been enough appreciated, though he gives them plenty of space in *Don Quixote* and elsewhere. It is impossible to understand him without following his theory of poetry and prose, his opinions about the

ideal and the actual. When you have followed them you will find that they leave you far short of the goal ; but you cannot get on without them. *Don Quixote* is one of the largest and roomiest books in the world, a book that has been, to many readers, a revelation of everything that is meant by imaginative freedom ; the delightful power of bringing real people before the mind. Yet this book, so much greater than any mere fine writing, was composed by a man who held strongly most of the literary superstitions of his time, whose original powers were in great part disabled, down to the end of his days, by literary conventions and formalities. What are the books on which he prided himself ? *Don Quixote*, no doubt ; but even more the *Galatea* ; to the very last he kept hoping for the second part of the *Galatea*, a thing long promised, which he had never been able to complete. Now the *Galatea* belongs to one of the most hopelessly artificial kinds of literature, the Arcadian pastoral romance, compared with which the crudest book of chivalry is amusing and life-like. And his latest book, for which he wrote the wonderful preface only a few days before his death, is *Persiles and Sigismunda*, a romance of a kind that is only less artificial than the pastoral—an imitation of those late Greek rhetorical novels which had such an extraordinary influence on the men of the Renaissance. If anything is contrary to the spirit of *Don Quixote*, you would say it was the formal abstract perfection which was the ideal of the pastoral schools, the pure rhetorical beauty that so often in different ways made ruin of poetical originality after the revival of Learning. Yet those Idols were worshipped by Cervantes, who did more than any man, except Rabelais, to turn the opinion of Christendom against the formalists of litera-

ture, more than any man after Shakespeare to discredit the vanities of rhetoric, in all business where men and women are really interested. It is all very strange ; perhaps one of the strangest paradoxes in history. It has been pointed out that Cervantes in his literary opinions is almost an echo of Sir Philip Sidney. They speak in the same amusing way about the popular drama of their time—one among many examples of the curious sympathy, long before there was any actual communication, between the literatures of England and Spain. There is the same chaffing of the popular dramatists, the same regard for the unities, and censure of the easy-going plays that paid no attention to the unities—" *Asia* on the one side and *Affrick* of the other," said Sidney, "and so many other under Kingdoms that the player when he commeth in must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived."

"What shall I say" (this is Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, speaking in the person of the Canon of Toledo, P.I. c. xlviii.), "What shall I say of their observance of time except that I have seen a play which began the first act in Europe, the second in Asia, and finished the third in Africa ; if there had been a fourth it would have taken America." The Canon speaks also, just like Sidney, of the child in swaddling bands in the first act, reappearing as a bearded man in the second.

Sidney and Cervantes have the same respect for Heliodorus, the same conception of the perfect prose romance, the heroic romance, with ideal characters, full of edification, the epic poem in prose. Fielding picked up this idea (of the prose epic) from Cervantes long afterwards, and was fond of regarding his own works in this way ; but Cervantes does not mean *Don*

Quixote when he speaks of the prose epic, he means something much more like *Persiles and Sigismunda*; a dignified composition with ideal personages. Sidney's *Arcadia*, with its mixture of pastoral and chivalrous romance, is a counterpart of both the idealist works of Cervantes, the *Galatea* and *Persiles*, and anticipates the heroic French romance of the seventeenth century. Sidney, it may be remarked, though he did not write *Don Quixote*, yet shows in some of his sonnets that he had a sharp eye for literary vanity and false rhetoric; the paradox and contradiction between the rhetorical idealist and the ironical comic genius is not as extreme as in the case of Cervantes, but it is there, and of the same sort.

Sidney's essay on Poetry and its echo, the discourse of the Canon of Toledo in *Don Quixote*, are among the evidences of the Renaissance—they prove that there once was such a thing (or force, or agency, or stream of tendency, or what not), and they show how the humanist ideas worked at times to the detriment of literature. Little good in the way of prose romances came from all this meditation on Achilles and Ulysses and Æneas, or from the attempts to reduce them to the service of modern novelists. The revival of learning meant for many years, and for a large part of Europe, the reign of empty and monotonous form; and the mutilation of many ingenuous minds through the tyranny of the barren ideal.¹ When the young man thinks first of the form of his great work, and goes looking about for stuff to put into it, we know what the result will be. Who can number the futile epics made according to receipt, the tragedies in blank verse, the

¹ Cf. Alfred Jeanroy, "Quelques réflexions sur le Quattrocento," *Bulletin italien* v. (1905) pp. 205-236.

odes written to fill up a pattern by well-educated young men? The wind has carried them away. Does not one overhear the vulgar westland voice of Andrew Fairservice saying: "Poet! him a poet! Twa lines o' Davie Lindsay wad ding a' he ever clerkit!"

There are some, it is true, who have got through with glory; Milton, all his life, was haunted by the empty shadows of the perfect Epic and the perfect Tragedy, like the ghosts craving for a drink of blood in the *Odyssey*; and Milton, as we know, was not defeated. His Epic and Tragedy had blood put into them, and they are still alive. But there are some very queer things in Milton's note-book, that seem to show how near he was to the danger of fruitless ambition, and his long list of possible subjects for a tragedy is just the sort of thing that looks like pretentious failure.

Cervantes also came through the ordeal, but in a different way from Milton. The formal ghosts never ceased to plague him; they came about his dying bed: "Where is that second part of the *Galatea*?" They interrupt his happiest hours, they pester his freest inventions; but they do not altogether gorgonise him. When he was not thinking about them he began the story of *Don Quixote*, and his greatest work escapes (not altogether, as we shall see) from the blight of the formalist ideal.

Don Quixote is one of the great chaotic books of the early modern age; it is not as reckless as Rabelais, but just for that reason, just because it is not consistently daring, it is more mixed and incongruous than the book of Pantagruel. Rabelais was quite untouched by those spectral ideal forms that came across the path of Cervantes; Cervantes is much less secure, and therefore perhaps more interesting.

Don Quixote is the most careless great work in the world. If it had come down from antiquity without a name or a date attached to it, it would long ago have been hacked to pieces and distributed by antiquarian commentators, by theorists on the growth of the prose epic, even as a piece of bread is cut up and stowed away when you put it down on an ant-hill. It might have a dozen different authors, besides interpolator A and interpolator B ; and last of all the foolish Homer who cobbles the pieces together into an immortal work. Consider, for example, the second half of the first part ; the adventures of the Sierra Morena and that which befell all Don Quixote's train in the Inn—a quarter of the whole completed book.

First of all there is the main action : Don Quixote's penance in imitation of Beltenebros (Amadis of Gaul)—Sancho Panza's embassy to Dulcinea—and the intervention of the Curate and Barber to bring Don Quixote home again.

Then there is the story of Cardenio and Lucinda, Don Fernando and Dorothea—a sentimental story with a definite plot, told partly in narrative by Cardenio and Dorothea, partly by Cervantes himself in the course of the day's work.

What is become of the play *The History of Cardenio*, written (according to the record) by Shakespeare and Fletcher ? Did Shakespeare read that wonderful encounter between the steady logical madness of Don Quixote and the flighty shaken wits of Cardenio ?

Don Quixote as the champion of the Princess Micomicona is brought back to the Inn which he took for a castle. Here it is scarcely possible to make out any chronology. No one goes to bed except Don Quixote ; who fights with the giant in his sleep and

cuts his head off, according to Sancho Panza's evidence ; the landlord saw only his perforated wine-skins. This interrupts the reading of the *Impertinent Curiosity*—one of the Tales of my Landlord—with which the Curate, the Barber, Dorothea and Cardenio are engaged. The *Impertinent Curiosity* is one of the best of the short stories of Cervantes—a correct piece of writing, more Italian than Spanish—one of the tragical cases or problems which were a favourite theme for casuists in fiction long before Browning or Ibsen. Then, after this story is finished, appears Don Fernando with Lucinda and his attendants—a fair troop of guests : *gaudeamus*, says the landlord ; and now the scene is taken up with the recognition of the unhappy lovers, and the fortunate conclusion of all their troubles ; after the novel that is merely read, you have the novel that is acted by Cardenio and Dorothea, Don Fernando and Lucinda. There is not much difference in style. When that affair is all settled, there are still more visitors, more lovers, to come to that well-frequented inn—the captive escaped from Algiers and his Moorish lady. Then the captive's story, but not till Don Quixote has delivered his oration comparing arms and letters. Next appears the judge and his daughter, Clara, and the judge turns out to be the captive's brother. And still they come. For even after the ladies have gone to bed there is still no sleep, and Clara is wakened up by Dorothea to listen to the singing of the muleteer outside in the moonlight—the muleteer who is the young man disguised, Donna Clara's lover. And there are still the officers of the Holy Brotherhood to be encountered, and the other barber who had a claim upon Mambrino's helmet, before Don Quixote can be brought home.

It is not merely a medley of adventures, it is that and something more ; it is a confusion of different styles and literary ideals. No great work was ever so casual as this of Cervantes, though there is something like the same accidental origin for the work of Fielding, his English follower and kinsman. A mischievous trick of parody is the beginning of *Joseph Andrews*, "that lewd and ungenerous engraftment," as Richardson called it, on Richardson's stock of moral fiction. The difference between Fielding and Cervantes is that Fielding had Cervantes before him, and as his work grew under his hands into something much more than he intended, he recognised it for what it was, and named it, and gloried in his relation to Cervantes. But Cervantes never got his work so clearly detached in his own mind from its accidental origins. His genius carried him far beyond his original joke, his quizzing of the books of chivalry, but it did not get him free from all the encumbrances of literary formulas, the pastoral, the abstract novel, and so forth.

If there is any difficulty in understanding *Don Quixote* it is made by the author's genius, which was like Chaucer and Shakespeare in variety of mood. Cervantes was a humorist ; that is, he could think of more than one thing at a time. Many commentators are without this faculty, and they are easily taken in and led to follow out one single line of intention, when the author is really working on a number of different lines all at once.

Hegel saw this in Cervantes, saw how the chivalry that was apparently burlesqued and flouted was there all the time in the impregnable character of Don Quixote, how the hyperbolical romance that seemed to be driven out of the world came back from infinity on

the other side. There is the same contradiction and harmony in one of the finest of all the succession of *Don Quixote*, in Miss Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, a slighter but a much more subtle and perfect work than *Don Quixote*. That also, by the way, may have been one of the accidental things that grow beyond the author's original purpose. *Northanger Abbey* is partly a reduction of Mrs. Radcliffe's inventions, of the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, to the conditions of real life, and Catharine Morland is in difficulties, like Don Quixote, because she takes her romances seriously. But there is much more in the book than the one comparatively trivial plot, the argument of the difference between Udolpho and an English county house in the reign of King George III. And among many other things there is romance, and even a rather heightened and exaggerated sort of romance, in the cruel treatment of the innocent heroine, the malignity of General Tilney, the appearance of his son as champion and defender. Cervantes in like manner puts the burlesque romance of Don Quixote and Dulcinea, the penance of Beltenebros, in the same scene with the affliction of Cardenio; and he expects you to take Cardenio's story for true pathos, all the while that Don Quixote is imitating that same sort of romantic theme—the distraction of the unhappy lover.

Cervantes, like Shakespeare, plays fast and loose with the old romantic motives, and tries to make the best of both worlds. This comes out in some of his novels; e.g. in *La Gitanilla* (the Spanish Gypsy, as we have learned to call her), where a purely romantic story is strengthened by means of notes taken from real life; the gypsies are not like the conventional shepherds of Arcadia. So in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare gets everything he wants out of the romance of the green

wood and the outlaws, the shepherd and shepherdess, while all the time Touchstone is there, and Rosalind finds the workaday world in the Forest of Arden. Of course this suggestion of reality, with Touchstone's criticism of the pastoral life, is all mischief; the poet is not fair; he gives you unstinted pure romance at the same time that he imposes on you these ironical references to the real world and its grossness, and pretends that he is a realist.

There is one passage in *Don Quixote*, and a very beautiful one, where Cervantes seems to be playing the same double game with regard to Arcadia, the story of the shepherdess Marcella. Marcella comes forward as an opponent of the conventional literary theory of the martyrs of love: the desperate lover killed by the disdain of the cruel beauty. She justifies herself against all reproaches, she is not to be blamed for the death of the poor youth Chrysostom. The amatory poets, it is implied, are too ready to take for granted that the beauty they profess to worship can have no mind, or will, or right to refuse their devotion. But the mischief of Marcella's reasonable argument is that it belongs to an episode where the pastoral conventions, instead of being exploded, are used by Cervantes as thoroughly and with infinitely greater effect than in his *Galatea*. In the Arcadian literature of the Renaissance there is no other scene so good, so distinctly remembered. If the Arcadian convention is justified anywhere it is here.

One cannot help feeling with Cervantes that there is one strong mark of difference between him and the other men of genius who have given in their fiction a large and generous view of the whole of life. He is much less free than Chaucer, not to speak of Shake-

speare. He is taken in by the solemn pretences of the learned schools of literature ; he believes in the dignity of certain established forms, the pastoral, the Greek prose romance. This is the true irony of *Don Quixote* and of the spirit of the age and of the world in which *Don Quixote* was written. The author sets out to make fun of the books of chivalry ; and all the time he is himself in the grip of a delusion as absolute as that of his hero—the authority of the most vacant and pithless of classical superstitions, the phantoms of Arcadian romance. You cannot imagine Shakespeare or Chaucer taken in like this by the literary principles of Polonius. Sancho says—"Every man is as God made him, and even worse very often." Where Cervantes is worse, it is due to the solemn literary prescriptions in which he believed.

But this is not the way to end. The lecturer or preacher is sometimes apt to forget the true relation between himself and his text. There ought to be no irreverence in pointing out what seem to be defects or fallacies in the great writer, and to understand Cervantes properly one has to accept many things much less amusing or profitable than the conversation of Sancho Panza. But the sum of the whole matter for this country is that *Don Quixote* has been made an English book, and adopted as no book has ever been, except the Bible. It is as familiar as the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the country is known almost as well as Vanity Fair and Doubting Castle. It is not quite as clear to English readers as Christian's journey ; one remembers some scenes as vividly, perhaps, but the travelling directions are harder to keep in mind. This, however, does not mean much, for where was any country so thoroughly comprehensible as Bunyan's ?

The scenery of Don Quixote is not the only picture that we have in our minds from Spain ; no land, except perhaps Greece or Palestine, has given more to that fanciful geography which is pure happiness, attainable luckily by people who were never " furth of this realm." Spain, from the Rock in the South, which is a pillar of Hercules, to the Pass in the North, which is Roncesvalles, is full of the visions of stories ; and of these there are none better known than the places of Don Quixote's wanderings. The house of Don Quixote himself, or rather of Alonso Quixano the Good, is easily recognisable. We know the unhappy library, and the courtyard where the books were burned ; we know the windmills in the open country, and the fulling-mills by the river. There is a very strong light on the landscape where the sun beats down on the shadowless grassless plain, and the air is full of dazzling heat, and the dust rises—that is Pentapolin of the Naked Arm. There are mountain solitudes, and woods and brooks. There are some effects of lamplight, as in the scene where Don Quixote rose against the " Moorism " of the puppet show. The Duke's house is rather vague, but the meeting with the hunting party and the Duchess, her falcon on her wrist, is vivid, and we remember a pretty picture of Don Quixote entangled in the birding-nets, and helped out of them by the two shepherdesses. There is little need to refer to the last scene of all, Don Quixote's farewell :

" There are no birds of this year in last year's nests, . . . and so let Master Notary proceed."

To think of those scenes and places is to bring to mind the genius of Cervantes, better than by any formal or studied praise.

XXIV

THE SPANISH STORY OF THE ARMADA ¹

I HAVE twice been led to discourse on Spain in this, my native town ; and once it was my own choice : the Philosophical Society left it to me to find a text anywhere in the wide world, and I chose *Don Quixote*. It may have been the success of that lecture that brought about an invitation from the School of Art to come and address the students there on Spain and the Renaissance. I did not find in myself any particular qualification for the task, but it was an adventure, and I look back on it with pleasure, and with perpetual gratitude to the small and very honourable company who helped me through, with their cheerful countenance, on one of the ugliest winter afternoons I can remember in Renfrew Street.

Now again I am challenged to come out and speak about Spain, and I find it no easier than it was the last time, and harder to get the right ground to start from. I have not been altogether idle lately, and there are many things I have learned, and more that I hope to find out, in the inexhaustible literature of Spain. But, though it is nearly fifty years since I first read a play of Lope (it was *El Acero de Madrid* in a volume borrowed from the College Library), I have not yet read

¹ A paper read to the Spanish Society of Scotland in Glasgow, December 17th, 1919.

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enough even to make a traveller's story out of it—I mean such a story as one brings back from a summer holiday in new countries and landscapes. Reading Lope de Vega is very like such a holiday, but it is difficult to say what it all amounts to, when the music has to stop—the melody of the *quintillas* and *redondillas*, that never fails, whatever the story or the scene may be : how is one to describe it ?

I thought again of the poem of the *Cid*—*El Cantar de Myo Cid*—and in that there was something more easily comprehensible, easier to describe, than the manifold changing pageant of Lope de Vega and his companions in the great age of the Castilian drama. One might compare the poem of the *Cid* with the *Song of Roland* ; there is enough in that for one sermon, and the themes are such that, without going very deep, it is possible to arrive at a sane and sensible opinion regarding these two wonderful old heroic poems. But, for one reason or another, I refused to take up the old epic of Castile.

There was another part of Spanish history, namely the Armada, which seemed to me to bring out, through all the deadly conflict of England and Spain, an agreement or likeness in taste and temper between England and Spain, while I remembered the passage in the *Memoirs of the Rev. James Melvill*, which gives Scotland a share in the story, and introduces, on the coast of Fife, personages whose lives and adventures are illustrated in the Spanish State Papers on the Armada, in the Spanish story of the Armada published in 1884 by Captain Cesáreo Fernandez Duro. The Spanish story of the Armada—Froude had told it in his own way, but there were many things which Froude had passed over in his selection of points of interest ;

Froude did not quote James Melvill, and did not show how Fernandez Duro's documents supplemented the Scottish narrative.

James Melvill, minister of Anstruther-Wester in 1586, also of Kilrenny, Abercromby, and Pittenweem, had gone to Glasgow in 1574 with his uncle Andrew, the Principal, and there taught as Regent :

" 1576, the second yeir of my regenting, I teatchit the elements of Arithmetick and Geometrie out Psellus for schortnes : the Offices of Cicero ; Aristotles Logic, in Greik, and Ethic (and was the first regent that ever did that in Scotland) also Platoes Phaeton and Axiochus ; and that profession of the Mathematiks, Logic and Morall Philosophie, I keipit (as everie ane of the regents keipit thair awin, the schollars ay ascending and passing throw) sa lang as I regented ther, even till I was, with Mr. Andro, transported to St. Andros."

Mr. James Melvill tells a story of College life in Glasgow in those days, one of the vivid, true things that keep the body of the bygone time. This digression may be allowed. One summer evening, as he was coming home from his fencing lesson in the Castle (a gentleman detained for manslaughter was his instructor), Mr. James Melvill was attacked by a student, Alexander Boyd, whom he had corrected for absenting himself from the Kirk and playing the loon on the Sabbath day. Along with the loon was an older friend of his, Alexander Cunningham, armed with sword and whingar. Mr. James closed with Cunningham :

" I gripped his sword arm under my left oxter, and with my right hand caught his quhingar, haiffing na kynd of wapean upon myself, and bids him stand."

There was a mighty noise about this ; all the Boyds came to town to bully the College. But the Principal

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was firm, and the loon broke down, and the dispute ended in laughter. The loon, Mark Alexander Boyd, was afterwards a scholar and poet of repute ; you will find him in the Oxford Book of English Verse, and in Mr. Bowyer Nichols's *English Sonnets*.

And here is James Melvill's story of the Spanish Armada :

MDLXXXIII. " That wintar the King was occupied in commenting of the Apocalypse, and in setting out of sermontes thairupon against the Papists and Spain-yartes. And yit, by a piece of grait owersight, the Papists practeised never mair bissellie in this land, and maid graitter preparation for receaving of the Spain-yartes, nor that yeir. For a lang tyme the newes of a Spanish navie and armie haid bein blasit abroad ; and about the Lambes tyde of the 1588, this Yland haid fund a feirful effect thair of, to the utter subversion bathe of Kirk and Polecie, giff God haid nought wonderfullie watched over the sam, and mightilie fauchten and defeat that armie be his souldiours, the elements, quhilk he maid all four maist fercelie to afflict tham till almost utter consumption. Terrible was the feir, persing war the pretchings, earnest, zealus, and fervent war the prayers, sounding war the siches and sobbes, and abounding was the teares at that Fast and General Assemblie keipit at Edinbruche, when the newes war credibly tauld, sumtymes of thair landing at Dunbar, sumtymes at St. Androis, and in Tay, and now and then at Aberdein and Cromartie first.¹ And in very deid, as we knew certeanlie soone efter, the Lord of Armies, wha ryddes upon the winges of the winds, the Keipar of his awin Israell, was in the mean tyme conveying that monstruus navie about our costes, and

¹ *Sic*, meaning Cromarty Firth.

directing thair hulkes and galiates to the ylands, rokkes, and sandes, whareupon he haid destinat thair wrak and destruction. For within twa or three monethe thairefter, earlie in the morning, be brak of day, ane of our bailyies cam to my bedsyde, saying (but nocht with fray), ‘ I haiff to tell yow news, Sir. There is arryvit within our herbrie this morning a schipefull of Spainyartes, but nocht to giff mercie bot to ask ! ’ And sa schawes me that the Commanders haid landit, and he haid commandit tham to thair schipe againe till the Magistrates of the town haid advysit, and the Spainyartes had humblie obeyit : therefor desyrit me to ryse and heir thair petition with tham. Upe I got with diligence, and assembling the honest men of the town, cam to the Tolbuthe ; and efter consultation taken to heir tham and what answer to mak, ther presentes us a verie reverend man of big stature, and grave and stout countenance, grey-heared and verie humble lyk, wha, after mikle and verie law courtesie, bowing down with his face neir the ground, and twitching my scho with his hand, began his harang in the Spanise toung, wharof I understud the substance ; and being about to answer in Latine he, haiffing onlie a young man with him to be his interpreter, began and tauld ower againe to us in guid Einglis. The sume was that King Philipe his maister haid riget out a navie and armie to land in Eingland, for just causes to be advengit of manie intolerable wrangs quhilk he had receavit of that nation ; but God for thair sinnes haid bein against thame and be storme of wather haid dryven the navie by the cost of Eingland, and him with a certean of capteanes, being the Generall of twentie hulks, upon an yll of Scotland, called the Fear Yll, wher they maid schipewrak, and whar sa monie

as haid eschapit the merciles sies and rokes, haid mair nor sax or sevin ouks suffered grait hunger and cauld, till conducing that bark out of Orkney, they war com hither as to thair special frinds and confederats to kiss the King's Majestie's hands of Scotland (and thairwith bekkit even to the yeard), and to find releiff and comfort thairby to him selff, these gentilmen Capteanes, and the poore souldarts, whase condition was for the present most miserable and pitifull.

"I answerit this mikle, in soum : That whowbeit nather our frindschipe quhilk could nocht be grait, seing thair King and they war frinds to the graitest enemie of Chryst, the Pope of Rome, and our King and we defyed him, nor yit thair cause against our nibours and speciall frinds of Eingland could procure anie benefit at our hands for thair releiff and confort ; nevertheless, they sould knaw be experience that we war men, and sa moved be human compassione and Christiannes of better relligion nor they, quhilk sould kytte, in the fruicts and effect, plan contrar to thars. For wheras our peiple resorting amangs tham in peacable and lawfull effeares of merchandise, war violentlie takin and cast in prisone, thair guidis and gear confiscat, and thair bodies committed to the crewall flaming fyre for the cause of Relligion, they sould find na thing amangs us bot Christian pitie and warks of mercie and almes, leaving to God to work in thair hearts concerning Relligion as it pleased him. This being trewlie reported again to him be his trunshman, with grait reverence he gaiff thanks, and said he could nocht make answer for thair Kirk and the lawes and ordour thairof, only for him selff, that ther war divers Scotsmen wha knew him, and to whome he haid schouin courtesie and favour at Calles (*i.e.* Cadiz), and as he supposit, some

of this sam town of Anstruther. Sa schew him that the Bailies granted him licence with the Capteanes to go to thair ludging for thair refreshment, bot to nane of thair men to land, till the ower-lord of the town war advertised, and understand the King's Majestie's mynd anent thame. Thus with grait courtesie he departed. That night, the Lard being advertised, cam, and on the morn, accompanied with a guid number of the gentilmen of the countrey round about, gaiff the said Generall and the Capteanes presence, and after the sam speitches, in effect, as befor, receavit tham in his hous, and interteined tham humeanly, and sufferit the souldiours to com a-land, and ly all togidder, to the number of threttin score, for the maist part young berdles men, sillie, trauchled, and houngered, to the quhilk a day or twa, keall, pattage, and fische was giffen ; for my advyse was conforme to the Prophet Elizeus his to the King of Israel, in Samaria, ' Giff tham bread and water,' etc. The names of the commanders war Jan Gomes de Medina, Generall of twentie houlkes ; Capitan Patricio, Capitan de Legoretto,¹ Capitan de Luffera, Capitan Mauritio, and Seingour Serrano.

" But verelie all the whyll my hart melted within me for desyre of thankfulnes to God, when I remem-berit the prydfull and crewall naturall of they peiple, and whow they wald haiff usit us in ceas they haid landit with thair forces amangs us ; and saw the woun-derfull wark of God's mercie and justice in making us sie tham, the cheiff commanders of tham to mak sic dewgard and curtesie to pure simen, and thair soul-darts sa abjectlie to beg almes at our dures and in our streites.

¹ Estéban de Lagorreta, in the *Capitana de las Urcas*, Fernandez Duro, ii. 39.

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“ In the mean tyme, they knew nocht of the wrak of the rest, but supposed that the rest of the armie was saiffly returned, till a day I gat in St. Androis in print the wrak of the Galliates in particular, with the names of the principall men, and whow they war usit in Yrland and our Hilands, in Walles, and uther partes of Eingland ; the quhilk when I recordit it to Jan Gomes, be particular and speciall names, O then he cryed out for greiff, bursted and grat. This Jan Gomes schew grait kyndnes to a schipe of our town, quhilk he fund arrested at Calles at his ham-coming, red to court for her, and made grait rus of Scotland to his King, tuk the honest men to his hous, and inquyrit for the Lard of Anstruther, for the Minister, and his host, and send hame manie commendationes. Bot we thanked God with our hartes, that we haid sein tham amangs us in that forme.”

[*Autobiography and Diary of Mr. James Melvill*, ed. Robert Pitcairn, Wodrow Society, 1842, pp. 260-264.]

Now among the papers published by Fernandez Duro is a narrative of the whole expedition, anonymous, which is plainly the story of Juan Gomez de Medina.¹ The Spanish historians have not read James Melvill ; the English historians, Froude and Sir John Laughton, leave him unmentioned, and thus Juan Gomez de Medina, also, has received less than his due. Here is a small contribution of my own to the history of the Armada, produced by “ combining his information.” The earlier part of the story, in the narrative of Juan Gomez, I will not repeat, as it is not my purpose to go over again the main history of the great sea battle. But there are points worth noting : as when he speaks

¹ *Op. cit.* ii. pp. 279-293.

of the English fleet coming out of Plymouth on the morning of the 1st. of August :

venía en ella el Capitan general: dicen se llamaba Invierno.

This is Spanish for Sir William Wynter.

And he has a note on the loss of the great man of war, *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* (1,150 tons), and the surrender of Don Pedro de Valdes. To us, at this distance of time, the meeting of Don Pedro de Valdes, a shipwrecked sailor, with Sir Francis Drake, and the dignified and considerate treatment of the prisoner, makes a picture of honourable war in the spirit of Velasquez his surrender of Breda, where the victor Spinola and the surrendered Justus van Nassau have part in the same world of true honour. Juan Gomez at the time recognises this, and salutes the enemy :

“ The ship was taken by the enemy that night, so we heard, and was more mercifully treated by them than by us ; D. Pedro was sent to London to the Queen, and the rest of the prisoners distributed all through the Island, it was reported.”

The same generous spirit shines through here as was to be shown by Juan Gomez, not long after he put the finishing words to his paper, writing with too much time to spare in the Fair Isle.

The abandonment of D. Pedro de Valdes was felt as a disgrace all through the Spanish fleet, and the shame is deepened through contrast with the generosity of the English. The abandonment of Pedro de Valdes and the explosion of the *San Salvador* were the beginning of ruin ; bad omens :

Estas dos desgracias fueron el anuncio de nuestra perdicion. Sucedió esto dentro de dos horas, que fué harto pesar à toda la Armada por el mal agüero.

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What was obvious to everyone in the great action is not left unnoted by Juan Gomez ; the great skill and daring of the English navy ; their superiority in sailing, and their consistent policy never to close, and always to keep the weather gauge—*teniendo siempre gran cuidado de tenernos ganado el barlovento*.

I take two entries in the Journal :

“ 9th August. Nothing fresh ; the two fleets continuing to sail in sight of one another, the enemy keeping to windward.”

“ 10th ,, We sailed on, with no certain knowledge of our destination, and always the enemy fleet in sight, keeping us to leeward.”

On the 13th, the writer tells of the Duke's order to throw horses and mules overboard ; there was no water on board to spare for them.

“ On the 14th, we saw many horses and mules swimming past : they kept on throwing them overboard, and it was pitiful to see, because they all made for the ships, looking for help. This was the first day that we had no sight of the enemy fleet.”

On the 17th, there was a gale and thick weather.

On the 18th, they lost sight of the Spanish fleet and the Duke's ship. Only three ships were in sight, the *Veneciana* and two hulks (*urcas*), besides the *urca* (*Capitana*) in which the writer was.

On the 31st of August, one of the hulks gave in, and called for help ; the pumps had got choked with ballast ; the men were taken off, but the weather was too bad to allow of any stores being taken.

From the 18th of August to the 2nd of September, they were tacking to weather Clare Island, “ but it pleased God not to allow us.”

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On the 2nd, they lost sight of the other two vessels, and went on beating up for the Cape : the wind was all the time against them.

On the 17th, in a storm, their hulk sprang a leak, and they had to run before the wind for Norway, 18th to 20th September.

Then the wind turned fair, lat. $57^{\circ} 30'$ N., in sight of Scottish islands, and they took their old course again, with hope to see "our dear Spain," more particularly as it was new moon.

21st to 23rd September : the leak getting worse, and the wind and sea too strong. Then, in a lull, they were able to stop the leak with hides and planks, so that one pump was enough to keep them fairly dry.

On the 24th, head wind : they turned for Scotland.

26th, got among islands, and had great trouble at night, in rough weather, finding islands ahead of them—"trouble which will be understood sufficiently by those who have seen the like."

At last, late on the 27th, at sunset, they made the Fair Isle :

"We found 17 households (*vecinos*) living there in huts ; wild people (*gente salvaje*) ; their food is mostly fish, without bread, except it be a little of barley, baked in cakes : their fires are fed with such fuel as they have in the island, which they simply take out of the earth ; they call it *turba*. They have cattle of a sort, enough for them ; they seldom eat meat : cows, sheep, swine : the cows are the most profitable (milk and butter) : they use the sheep's wool for their clothes. They are not a clean people ; neither Christians, nor yet utter heretics. They say they do not like the preachers who come to them yearly from another island near (*los que les vienen à pedricar cada año*) ;

but they say that they cannot do anything: it is a pity.

"We landed 300 men in the island, with no provision. From the 28th of September, Michaelmas Eve, to the 14th of November, 50 have died, the most part of hunger—*que es la mayor lástima del mundo*. We determined to send messengers to the neighbouring island, to ask for boats to convey us to Scotland, where we might find a passage, or other help. But from the 28th of September to the Eve of St. Simon and St. Jude, the 27th of October, there was no possible chance: the weather was too bad. On that day, the weather was fair (*un tiempo afile*), and they were able to go. They have not yet returned, for the violence of the sea (*por la braveza de la mar*)."

There the story breaks off, November 14th. James Melvill tells the rest. Many stories of the Spanish fleet have a less happy ending.

The interest of all this is what our own poet, John Barbour, explained at the beginning of his *Bruce*—it is all a good story, and it is true. The advantage of true stories is that they compel you to make them yourself: you do not get the good of it unless you do a little work. Here one part of the story is in the Minister's Diary, another part in Spanish archives and the published work of the Spanish naval historian. You bring the two together, and suddenly you find that you are looking at the real life of the past, you are admitted to see the working of Fate or Chance or Providence through the weary wash of the Northern seas—bringing about, at some expense, the meeting of those two very estimable gentlemen, James Melvill and Juan Gomez, and something of generous life and good feeling to put on the other side of the account, against

the merciless treatment of the shipwrecked Spanish on other coasts, by Sir Richard Bingham, Governor of Connaught, and Sir William Fitzwilliam, the Deputy in Ireland.¹

Of all the stories of the Armada, there is none to beat Captain Francisco de Cuéllar's adventure in Ireland, as narrated by himself in a letter to an unnamed correspondent. Cuéllar's letter is freely used by Froude, but Froude leaves out many things, and much of the spirit is lost. The truth is that "none but itself can be its parallel"; it cannot be paraphrased or diluted, and the much praised literary art of the English historian does no more than make neat English sentences through which the irrepressible high spirits of the man himself are not revealed as they are in the original. It is one of the true documents that rather put the reader out of conceit with the humour of novels and plays. His trials were about as much as any one could stand; shipwrecked and half drowned on some shore in Sligo Bay; barely escaping the knives of the wild Irish wreckers and the strictly legal executioners of Fitzwilliam and Bingham; stripped and plundered. Froude gives one specimen of his wit, speaking of the pretty Irish girl, who told him she was a Christian—"and so she was," says Cuéllar, "as good a Christian as Mahomet." Froude does not tell the occasion; the Irish girl had taken Cuéllar's string of relics that he always wore round his neck, and put it round her own, with the religious motive which is thus estimated by the Spanish captain. By the way, Cuéllar, before his shipwreck, had nearly been hanged by the Duke of Medina Sidonia out of pedantry; Cuéllar's ship had gone ahead in the North Sea, and

¹ Note A, Appendix.

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was thought by the Duke to be deserting. Another gentleman was hanged for deserting, on no better grounds ; Cuéllar was got off with difficulty. His good luck is as frequent as his trials, though, in the usual fashion of good luck, it mostly seems only to take a little off the accumulated score of affliction and misery. Still, he got through the wretched country, helped by priests in disguise, away from the ruined monastery where bodies of Spaniards were hanging from the gratings. He was guided to O'Rourke's country, and found assistance there. One is rather disappointed to find him not very much impressed, though not ungrateful. He had reason to join in the song :

O'Rourke's noble fare
Will ne'er be forgot,
By those who were there,
Or by those who were not.

I will not repeat his adventures, but it is worth noting and it is not noted by Froude, that he writes down in Spanish the name which the Irish used for the English ; the name is " Sasanás," and it does not need a commentary.

Cuéllar at last got over to Scotland ; there was no help to be found in the King : *El Rey de Escocia no es nada* ; he has no authority, nor the manners of a king. But the Spanish captain found his way to the Low Countries, fresh dangers springing up, even at the very end of his travels.

There he sits down, and writes his story ; and the curious thing is that he knows, and sets down in words, the same contradiction between reality and the description of reality that we feel to-day when we go through these old memoirs, and think that once the

writers of them were toiling for their lives in the salt water, though their story now is scarcely more than a dream. Cuéllar, at the time, writes to his correspondent, "All this will serve to amuse you after dinner, like a passage in the books of chivalry."

y porque V.m. se ocupe un poco despues de comer como por via de entretenimiento en leer esta carta, que casi parecerá sacada de algun libro de caballerías, la escribo tan larga para que V.m. vea en los lances y trabajos que me he visto.

That is the humour of it. *Y los sueños sueño son.*

The Spanish records of the Armada let you in to all sorts of real life, adventures like those of the books of chivalry, or, as we should say, like a novel, but with the inexplicable force and meaning that belongs to reality, that shows the thing "richt as it was"—to come back to Barbour's phrase again. I have a Spanish picture here¹ of a little old Scotch tramp, held up by the Spaniards off the Cornish coast after the first unlucky sailing of the Spanish fleet. The Scillys were the rendezvous, and when the fleet was dispersed by the storm, some captains made their way there, and spent some time scouting about the Land's End. There, two small vessels were taken, Saturday, 2nd July, N.S., one of them going to France with coal. It had two friars on board, fugitives from the north of Ireland, where the English had burnt two chief monasteries, one Bernardine, the other Franciscan, and the friars as well. This Scotch ship was twenty-two days out from a port named "Durat." What is this? Dunbarton? All spellings are possible in these documents, and it may have been Dunbarton. It may have been Gourock.

What shall we say to the skipper's story that, when

¹ Fernandez Duro, ii. p. 161.

he left, the common talk was that a nobleman named " Bilonmat " from Spain had been in Scotland enlisting men (*que hacía gente*) and that the King of Scotland had imprisoned him ? Was the skipper providing his Spanish entertainers with such news as he thought would please them, and did he throw in " Ben Lomond " as a well-sounding name in default of a better ? Anyhow, there is the little Scotch coal gabbert, sailing in company with an Irish boat of a similar build, the two of them caught off the Long Ships by Spanish men-of-war on the 2nd July, N.S., 1588, in wild weather, blowing hard from the north-east and the sea running high. Juan Gomez with his hulks, as it happened, was not far off (*op. cit.* ii. p. 164).

The moral is that the rivalry of England and Spain includes a great and real likeness between the two nations. They belong to the Ocean stream, and the Spanish yarns are of the same sort as the English reports of voyages in Hakluyt. The people of the Peninsula made a more direct attempt to turn their voyages into poetry ; England has nothing to compare with the great Portuguese epic of the voyage of Vasco da Gama, the Spanish epic of Chile. But I do not believe that any foreign nation is better qualified than the people of this island to appreciate *Os Lusíadas* of Camoens or *La Araucana* of Juan de Ercilla.

NOTE A.

SIR RICHARD BINGHAM, GOVERNOR OF CONNAUGHT, TO THE QUEEN, December 3rd, 1588.

Laughton, *Defeat of the Armada* (Navy Records Society), ii. p. 299.

... I have adventured, in the consideration of my duty and bounty of your Highness's favour toward me, your

poor and faithful soldier, to present your Highness now with these humble and few lines, as a thanksgiving to Almighty God for these his daily preservations of your sacred person, and the continual deliverance of us, your Majesty's subjects, from the cruel and bloody hands of your Highness's enemies, and that lastly from the danger of the Spanish forces, defeated first by your Majesty's navy in the narrow Seas, and sithence overthrown through the wonderful handiwork of Almighty God, by great and horrible shipwrecks upon the coasts of this realm, and most upon the parts and creeks of this province of Connaught, where it hath pleased your Majesty to appoint my service under your Highness's Lord Deputy. Their loss upon this province, first and last, and in several places, was 12 ships, which all we know of, and some two or three more supposed to be sunk to seaboard of the out isles ; the men of which ships did all perish in the sea, save the number of 1,100 or upward, which we put to the sword ; amongst whom there were divers gentlemen of quality and service, as captains, masters of ships, lieutenants, ensign-bearers, other inferior officers, and young gentlemen, to the number of some 50, whose names I have for the most part set down in a list,¹ and have sent the same unto your Majesty ; which being spared from the sword till order might be had from the Lord Deputy how to proceed against them, I had special direction sent me to see them executed, as the rest were, only reserving alive one, Don Luis de Cordova, and a young gentleman, his nephew, till your Highness's pleasure be known.

NOTE B.

I offer an emendation in the text, in a very interesting paper printed by Fernandez Duro, ii. p. 163 : report of the *Alférez* Esquivel who sailed in a pinnace, June 27 N.S., from La Coruña to look for the scattered ships. He came in for the wild weather off the Land's End a few days later ; running south before the wind on July 2 they were pooped :

... nos dió un golpe de mar que nos sobrepujó por encima de la popa de medio en medio, de manera que

¹ [Juan Gil, *alférez* (ensign, 'Ancient') was one of them, who picked up the Falmouth boatmen, July 20th, scouting in a *zabra*, Fernandez Duro, ii, p. 229.]

quedamos á ras con la mar, anegados y del todo perdida la pinaza que con la mucha diligencia que se puso á agotar el agua con barriles que desfondamos y baldes, y la hecha con [*sic*] que se hizo de todo lo que habia dentro, fué nuestro Señor servido de que hiciese cabeza la pinaza . . .

For "la hecha con," which is nonsense, read "la hechaçon." The word, printed "echazon," comes a line or two later in the narrative, and is clearly required in this place: "We were pooped by a heavy sea, swamped and the pinnace done for, but that doing all we could to bale with barrels, knocking the tops out, and buckets, and with jettison (*echazon*) of all the stuff on board, by the favour of God we brought the pinnace up and got way on her." The whole story is worth reading.

XXV

ON THE DANISH BALLADS. I

THE close relation between the Danish and the Scottish ballads has long been recognised. Jamieson particularly called attention to the subject by his translations from the Danish, included in his own *Popular Ballads*, in the notes to the *Lady of the Lake*, and in larger numbers, with a fuller commentary, among the *Illustrations of Northern Antiquities* (1814), edited by Scott. Motherwell in the introduction to his *Minstrelsy* referred to the likenesses which Jamieson had already pointed out, and added a note of his own on the ballad of *Leesome Brand* and its Danish counterpart. All the earlier discoveries in this field are of course recorded, with innumerable additions, in the great work of Svend Grundtvig,¹ the collection of all the Danish ballads which is being so worthily completed by his successor Dr. Axel Olrik ; while the same matters, the correspondences of ballads in English and Danish (not to speak of other languages), are to be found, with frequent acknowledgments of obligation to Grundtvig, in the companion work of Child.² The commentaries of

¹ *Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser*, quoted as *D.g.F.*, five volumes, 1853-1890 ; continued by Dr. Axel Olrik, *Danske Ridderviser*, 1895-1902 (in progress).

² *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, edited by Francis James Child, five volumes, Boston, 1882-1898.

Grundtvig and Olrik on the one hand, of Child on the other, leave one almost in despair as to the possibility of ever making out the history of the connection between the ballads of this country and of Denmark. The present paper is little more than an attempt to define some of the problems.

I

Danish ballads—the name “Danish” for many purposes in relation to ballads may be taken to mean also Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, and Faroese—have preserved more than the English, and much more than the German, of their original character as dancing songs. Though the dancing custom has long died out in Denmark, hardly any of the ballads are without a refrain; and when the refrain is missing, there is generally other evidence to prove that the ballad is not really Danish. Thus the ballad of *Grimild's Revenge*, a version of the Nibelung story, which has no refrain, is known to be of German origin on other grounds; the plot of it agrees with the *Nibelungenlied* in one most important thing which makes all the difference between the German and Northern conception of that tragic history. Other examples may be found in Dr. Steenstrup's book on the ballads,¹ admirably stated and explained. And though Denmark has lost the old custom of the dance, it is well known how it is retained in the Faroes;² the old French *carole*

¹ *Vore Folkeviser*, 1891.

² The ballads of the Faroes, including the dance and the tunes, are being studied by Mr. Hjalmar Thuren of Copenhagen, who has collected much new material since his preliminary essay (*Dans og Kvaddingtning paa Faerøerne, med et Musikbilag*, 1901; in German, expanded, in *Sammelbände der internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, iii. 2, pp. 222-269).

being there the favourite amusement, with any number of ballads to go along with it, and the refrain always an essential part of the entertainment.

The French *carole* was well established in the twelfth century in Denmark, and even in Iceland, where the word *danz* is used of the rhymes sung—the *ballade*—rather than of the dancing itself. The chief documents of this early part of the history are clerical protests against the vanity of the new fashion, much the same in Denmark, Iceland, France, England, and Germany; *e.g.* in the common story of the dancers on whom a judgment fell, so that they could not leave off dancing, but kept at it night and day.¹

Fortunately the preachers and moralists, in noting the vices of the dancing song, have given some of the earliest information about it, and the oldest quotations. There are few remains of English lyrical poetry of the twelfth century, but the fact of its existence is proved by historians. Giraldus Cambrensis in his *Gemma Ecclesiastica* has a chapter against songs and dances in churches and churchyards, and tells a story of a priest in the dioceses of Worcester who was so haunted by the refrain² of a song which he had heard repeated all night long about his church, that in the morning at the Mass instead of *Dominus vobiscum* he said *Swete lemman thin are*—"Sweet heart, take pity!" Almost at the same time is found the first notice of the ring-

¹ Cf. Gaston Paris, *Les Danseurs Mardits, légende allemande du XI siècle*, 1900. There is another story in the Durham *Exempla* described by M. Paul Meyer (*Notices et Extraits*, xxxiv.). A priest, a lusty bachelor, was fond of wakes and dances; once, however, he saw at a dance two devils to each man and woman, moving their arms and legs, *ad omnes motus et vertigines quas faciebant*.

² "Interjectam quandam cantilenæ particulam ad quam saepius redire consueverant, quam refectoriam seu refractoriam vocant." Giraldus Cambrensis, *Rolls Series*, ii. 120.

dance in Denmark: the great Archbishop Absolon, about 1165, had to correct the monks of Eskilsoe who kept their festivals with too much glory, and who approved of dancing in hall.¹ Passages showing the opposition of the clergy and the strong vogue of the dance in early days are quoted from the Bishop's *Lives of Iceland* in the essay on "Dance and Ballad" in the *Oxford Corpus*.² The earliest ballad refrains in Icelandic belong to the thirteenth century; one of them (A.D. 1264) repeated by an Icelandic gentleman on his way to meet his death.

Mínar eru sorgir þungar sem blý.

(My sorrows are heavy as lead.)

which was intended originally as a lover's complaint and is applied humorously otherwise in the quotation.³

The French lyrical dancing game appears to have conquered the north just at the critical period when the world became closed to northern adventurers of the old type, when the Viking industry was passing away, and along with it much of the old northern poetical traditions. It is known how King Hacon of Norway (our adversary at Largs) encouraged French romance in Norwegian adaptations—a sign of changing manners. These were in prose, but besides these the Icelandic quotations above referred to show how French tunes and French rhymes were taking the place of the old narrative blank verse, even there in Iceland. Denmark had probably been accustomed to rhyme long before, through the example of German minstrels, whether

¹ Steenstrup, *Danmarks Riges Hist.*, i. p. 688.

² *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, ed. Vigfússon and York Powell, ii. p. 385.

³ *Ibid.* p. 387; *Sturlunga Saga*, Oxford, 1878, ii. 264.

Canute the Dane really made his song about the monks of Ely or no.

This is all some way from the ballads, English, Scottish, or Danish. The French *caroles* could get on without stories ; the refrains quoted by Giraldus and by Sturla have nothing about them to show that they were used in those days with narrative ballads ; rather the contrary. The essay on the Icelandic *danz*, above quoted, takes very strongly the view that there was no narrative along with the *danz* in Iceland ; that the verses of those early ballads were satirical or amatory. Narrative was supplied in a different way.

But at some time or other the refrain began to be used regularly in Denmark, as it is now used in the Faroes, along with narrative poems : *ballads*, as we ordinarily understand the term. The date of the first ballads is not likely to be discovered soon ; and for the present it may be well to leave it alone. One thing, or rather a large system of things, is certain, and interesting enough, whatever the dates may be.

The use of refrains constantly in Denmark, and less regularly in this country, makes it necessary to regard the English and Danish ballads as one group over against the German ballads of the Continent. Resemblances in matter between English and Danish ballads are not so frequent as we might expect ; but there is identity of manner almost everywhere, at any rate where the ballads of this side have refrains along with them.

In some of the Danish ballads the chorus comes in at the end, as in the old English poem of *Robin and Gandeley*n, where the overword

Robin lieth in green wood bounden,

has an effect like the Danish in such refrains as

Udi Ringsted hviles Dronning Dagmar
(In Ringsted rests Queen Dagmar),

or

For nu stander Landet i Vaade
(For now stands the land in danger).

More peculiar is the form of chorus, which perhaps makes the chief likeness between the Danish ballads and ours ; certainly the most obvious likeness as far as form is concerned ; that is where there is one refrain after the first line, another after the second, as in many well-known examples :

There was twa sisters liv'd in a bower,
Binnorie, O Binnorie !
There came a knight to be their wooer
By the bonny mill-dams o' Binnorie.
—Child, No. 10.

O wind is longer than the way
Gar lay the bent to the bonny broom,
And death is colder than the clay,
And you may beguile a fair maid soon.
—Child, No. 10.

There were three sisters fair and bright,
Jennifer, Gentle and Rosemarie,
And they three loved one valiant knight,
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree.
—Child, No. 10.

Seven kings' daughters here hae I slain
Aye as the gowans grow gay,
And ye shall be the eight o' them
The first morning in May.
—*Lady Isabel and the Elf-knight* ; Child, No. 4.

The Danish manner is as well known here as anything in a foreign tongue can be, from Jamieson's translation

of *Svend Dyring*, given by Scott in the notes to the *Lady of the Lake* :

'Twas lang i' the night, and the bairnies grat,
And O gin I were young,
Their mither she under the mools heard that
I' the greenwood it lists me to ride.

Sometimes there is a likeness of refrain, along with identity of subject, between a Scottish and a Danish ballad. This Scottish verse is taken from a variant of *Leesome Brand* (Child, No. 16 ; i. p. 184) :

He houkit a grave long, large, and wide,
The broom blooms bonnie, and so is it fair,
He buried his auld son down by her side,
And we'll never gang up to the broom nae mair.

The following is from one of the many Danish versions of the same story (*D.g.F.*, No. 271, *Redselille og Medelvold* ; v. p. 249) :

Han grov en Grav baade dyb og bred,
Hvem plukker Løven udaf Lilientree ?
Der lagde han dennem alle ned,
Selv traeder hun Duggen af.

In Child's collection, which is full of miracles, there are not many things more wonderful than the Shetland ballad of Orpheus (Child, No. 19), " obtained from the singing of Andrew Coutts, an old man in Unst, Shetland, by Mr. Biot Edmonstone " :

Yees tak' your lady, an' yees gaeng hame,
Scowan ùrla grùn ;
An' yees be king ower a' your ain,
Whar giorten han grùn oarlac.

The refrain here is " Norn," a fragment of the old northern speech of Shetland, belonging to the same Danish ballad tradition as that other miracle, the

Foula ballad of Hildina, still remembered, but not understood, in the eighteenth century, and interpreted, though not easily, by northern scholarship.¹

The Hildina poem is part of the same story as the Middle High German *Gudrun* ; Andrew Coutts' song is connected in some way with the old romance of *Orfeo* which professes to be a Breton lay, and certainly belongs to the same order as the lays of Marie de France in the twelfth century. It goes back to the very beginnings of modern literature, to the early days of French romance ; a Greek story adapted, with strange success, to the fashions of the court of Faery, as many other classical matters were adapted, from Troy or Thebes, and made into " Gothic " stories. And further, this relic of early medieval fancy appears in Shetland with a Norse refrain, unintelligible by this time to those who hear it, and to the singer himself, but closely resembling the burden of Danish ballads. The last line is uncertain, even to Grundtvig : the first, however—the *indstev* as it would be called in Norway—is very near the *indstev* of the Danish *Esbern Snare*, for example (*D.g.F.*, No. 131) :

" The shaws are green and gay "—

Hr. Iver og Hr. Esbern Snare

—Skoven staar herlig og grøn—

de drukke Mjød i Medelfare

Den Sommer og den Eng saa vel kunne sammen.

It would be premature to fix on Shetland as the chief meeting place or trading station between the ballads of Scotland and Norway ; no doubt there were other ways of intercourse. Quite apart from such questions,

¹ George Low, *A Tour through Orkney and Schetland in* 1774, Kirkwall, 1879 ; Hae stad, *Hildinakvadet*, Christiania, 1900.

the ballad of Orpheus brings out the close likeness between the Danish and the English fashion of refrain ; and it is this, more than anything else, which makes a distinction between the northern group of ballads—English, Danish—and the German ballads, High Dutch or Low Dutch, in which there is hardly an example of this sort. Interpolated refrains are found in the popular poetry of all the world, but the special manner common to Scottish and Danish ballads is not used in Germany. There the chorus does not come in after the first line with lyrical phrases :

O gin I were young—

And the sun shines over the valleys and a'.

Such things are found in German at the end of the stanza sometimes :

Dar steit ein lindboem an jenem dal
is bawen breit und nedden schmal
van gold dre rosen.

—Uhland, 15B.

But where there is an *indstev* it is generally mere exclamation, like “ hey down ” or “ hey lillelu ” in English. There is, indeed, one German ballad, *Hinrich* (Uhland, No. 128), which is exactly in the Danish or Scottish manner :

Her Hinrich und sine bröder alle dre
vull grone,
Se buweden ein schepken tor se
umb de adlige rosenblome.

There does not seem to be any other, though there are instances of interpolated refrain of rather a different kind :

Maria wo bist du zur Stube gewesen ?
Maria mein einziges Kind.

This ballad is one of the analogues of *Lord Randal*, and the refrain is used in the same way.

Other examples, kindly given me along with these by my friend Professor J. G. Robertson, are from poems too completely lyrical to be compared, except in a general way, with the ballads :

Frisch auf gut gsell lass rummer gan !
 tummel dich guts weinlein.
 das gläslein sol nicht stille stan
 tummel dich, tummel dich, guts weinlein.

—Uhland, No. 219 ; compare No. 221.

Wo find ich dann deins Vaters Haus,
 Säuberliches Mägdlein ?
 Geh das Gässlein aus und aus,
 Schweig still und lass dein Fragen sein.

—*Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, ed. 1857, ii. p. 434.

Wer singet im Walde so heimlich allein ?
 O du liebe liebe Seel ! O mein einziges Kind !
 O weh !

Und die Kirchenglocken, sie läuten darein
 Und das Scheiden und das Meiden, wie tut es
 doch so weh !

Ade ! ade !

Ich seh' dich nimmermehr !

—Hoffmann von Fallersleben, *Herr Elrich*, 1823.

There are two rather remarkable things here : that German ballad poetry should have avoided this kind of burden, though it is a common form in lyrical poetry ; and that Denmark, though so near to Germany, borrowing half its dictionary from the German, and copying German literature in so many ways, should have taken its own line in the narrative ballads, and kept to it so distinctly and thoroughly. Denmark was shot through with German influences of all sorts from the earliest days ; Danish life in the Middle Ages was

overpowered by Germany as much as English culture was indebted to France. But in this field the Danes refused to allow any German example to prevail. Their ballads resemble those of England and Scotland, countries with which there was much intercourse indeed, but nothing like the intimate relations with Germany.

Further, this reservation in ballad-poetry, this rejection of German examples, was not the survival of anything ancient, national, northern, Scandinavian, beating off the foreign intruder. It was not like the continuance, in England, of the old national verse, the alliterative line that in *Piers Plowman* and other famous poems holds its ground against the French measures and rhymes. The form of ballad-poetry in Denmark is not native, nor old, as age is counted in the history of those northern lands. As in England and Scotland, it is a foreign importation, truly and entirely French.

II

Resemblances in matter between Danish and Scottish ballads have by this time been pretty fully discussed, and it is hard to add anything new, after the commentaries of Grundtvig and Child. On the whole, it may be said that the correspondence is rather less than one might expect. It is very close in certain cases, especially in *Earl Brand*,¹ *Sir Aldingar*,² *Binnorie*,³ *Leesome Brand*,⁴ *Fause Foodrage*,⁵ with their Danish counter-

¹ Child, No. 7 ; cf. *D.g.F.* 82, *Ribold og Guldborg* ; 83, *Hildebrand og Hilde*.

² Child, No. 59 ; cf. *D.g.F.* 13, *Ravengard og Memering*.

³ Child, No. 10 ; cf. *D.g.F.* 95, *den talende Strengelig*.

⁴ Child, No. 15 ; cf. *D.g.F.* 270-273.

⁵ Child, No. 89 ; cf. *D.g.F.* 298, *Svend af Voldersløv*.

parts. In *Earl Brand* and *Leesome Brand* the names have been thought to be Danish; also the name "Clerk Colvin," it is conjectured, is derived from the Olaf who rides out and meets the Elfwoman and comes home to die.¹ There are indications of borrowing from Denmark and Norway in the story of *Earl Brand*, which is the *Douglas Tragedy* in another form. In all the northern versions the action turns on the deadly power of the name; the hero warns his bride when he is attacked by her father and brothers that she must not name him while he is fighting.² She breaks this command when he has killed them all but one:

"Stay you, stay you, Hildebrand! stay you, in Our Lord's name! Let my youngest brother live; he can bring my mother the tidings home!"

Scarcely were the words spoken, he fell to the earth with eighteen wounds.

There is hardly a trace of this in the English and Scottish versions. Generally one is not inclined to look on this country as in debt to Scandinavia for literary things; it is known that Norway borrowed from Scotland part of the romance of Charlemagne, according to the note in *Karlamagnus Saga* at the beginning of the chapter concerning the Lady Olif and Landres her son,³ and it is not too much to suppose that in many

¹ Child, No. 42; cf. *D.g.F.* 47, *Elveskud*, and the notes thereto.

² Cf. Nyrop, "On the Power of the Name," *Navnets Magt*, 1887.

³ "This story was found by Sir Bjarni Erlingsson of Bjarkey written and told in English speech in Scotland, when he stayed there the winter after the death of King Alexander. Now the kingdom after him went to Margaret, daughter of the worshipful Lord Eric, King of Norway, son of King Magnus, and the said Margaret was daughter's daughter of Alexander. Sir Bjarni was sent west to that end that he might secure and establish the realm under the maiden. And that the tale might be better understood by men, and they might receive thereof the more profit and pastime, Sir Bjarni had it turned from English into Norse."—*Karlamagnus Saga*, ed. Unger Christiania, 1860, p. 50.

other cases England or "the English tongue in Scotland" may have provided the north with literature, and served as intermediary between the north and France.

The Danish editors accept for many of the ballads an English or Scottish origin, though the evidence is seldom very substantial. *Earl Brand*, not to speak of the Shetland Orpheus, appears to show that the trade was not all one-sided.

The problems of transmission are made more difficult by a large number of Danish ballads which, though they have no analogues in this country, are found—the plots of them, that is—in France, Provence, Lombardy, Catalonia, and Portugal. M. Gaston Paris, in his review of Count Nigra's ballads of Piedmont,¹ clearly marked out what might be called the ballad region in the Latin countries, extending from France to northern Italy on one side to the north of Spain on the other; not including the south of Italy, where popular poetry is generally lyrical, nor Castile, where the ballads are of a different order from those of Catalonia and of France. English ballads have many relations with this southern province; Child's indices are enough to show this. That the Danish ballads are connected in the same way was at first rather overlooked by Grundtvig, but the ground has been thoroughly surveyed in the later volumes of the *Folkeviser*. It may be remarked that Prior, the English translator of the Danish ballads, was one of the first to see that the popular poetry of France had been too much neglected in comparing ballad themes of different northern countries. The results, now that the comparisons have been made, are rather surprising.

¹ *Journal des Savans*, 1889.

Briefly, they show that there is a considerable stock of ballads common to Denmark and the Latin countries from which England and Scotland are excluded, at least as far as the extant literature goes. Instead of the close relation between Denmark and Scotland which one had expected to find, there comes into view a closer relation between Denmark and France. Nothing can destroy the kinship of poetical form between Scotland and Denmark, the likenesses of rhythm and phrasing and refrain. In matter, however, there are many Danish ballads unparalleled in this country which are found in France and Italy. And in form also it may be that there is as close resemblance between Denmark and France as between Denmark and Scotland. But the matter of the ballad stories is to be dealt with first.

The following are some of the chief instances of ballads common to Denmark and "Romania," which are not found in the English tongue, either in Scotland or England. The ballad of the dead mother's return to help her children¹ is known to most of the Romance languages in the region described. Generally the southern versions have rather a different plot from the well-known one of Jamieson's *Svend Dyring*. There the mother in heaven is grieved by her children's crying, and comes to the Lord to ask leave to return to middle-earth. In France, and generally in the south, the children go to the graveyard to find their mother; on the way they meet with Jesus Christ, who asks them where they are going, and calls their mother back to take care of them. But in the Piedmontese version,²

¹ *D.g.F.* 89.

² Nigra, *Canti popolari del Piemonte*, No. 39, *La Madre Risuscitata*; references to French and Provençal versions, *ibid.*, p. 213.

as in *Svend Dyring*, the mother is wakened by the children's crying at home; and in many Danish variants¹ the children go to the churchyard; "the first grat water, the second grat blood, the third she grat her mother up out of the black earth."

In Scotland there is apparently nothing corresponding beyond what is told by Jamieson in *Northern Antiquities* (p. 318): "On the translation from the Danish being read to a very ancient gentleman in Dumfriesshire, he said the story of the mother coming back to her children was quite familiar to him in his youth, as an occurrence of his own immediate neighbourhood with all the circumstances of name and place." (Not recorded by Jamieson.) "The father, like Child Dyring, had married a second wife, and his daughter by the first, a child of three or four years old, was once missing for three days. She was sought for everywhere with the utmost diligence, but was not found. At last she was observed coming from the barn, which during her absence had been repeatedly searched. She looked remarkably clean and fresh; her clothes were in the neatest possible order; and her hair, in particular, had been anointed, combed, curled, and plaited, with the greatest care. On being asked where she had been, she said she had been with her *mammie*, who had been so kind to her, and given her so many good things, and dressed her hair so prettily."

The ballad of *The Milk White Doe*, translated from the French by Mr. Andrew Lang,² is better known perhaps than most other French ballads in this country, and the version is so right that one would scarcely

¹ Grundtvig's versions, D, E, F, M, N, P, in his second volume.

² *Ballads and Lyrics of Old France*, 1872, p. 68; cf. Haupt, *Fransösische Volkslieder*, p. 19 (*La Biche Blanche*).

wonder if the same story in like phrases were discovered in some old manuscript ballad-book, such as the Danish ladies were fond of making three hundred years ago. What is not found in Scotland, except thus through the skill of the translator, is found in Denmark and Sweden. In Scottish traditional poetry there is little but a passing reference in *Leesome Brand* to show that possibly a ballad on the same theme once existed. In Danish and Swedish there is a poem that answers closely to the French ; it has the same kind of lyrical quality, and is shorter than most of the northern ballads :

The mother charged her son (*in the green-wood*) : " See thou shoot not the little hind (*that bears gold under her shoulder*) : Shoot thou the hart, and shoot the roe, but let the little hind go free." Sir Peter goes to the rosy wood ; there plays a hind as his hound comes on. The little hind plays before his foot ; he forgot that he was to let her go. He bent his bow against his knee, against a tree-trunk he shot the hind. Sir Peter drew off his gloves so fine ; with his own hands he would flay her. He flayed at her neck ; he found his sister's tresses. He flayed at her breast ; he found his sister's gold rings. He flayed at her side ; he found his sister's white hands. Sir Peter cast his knife to the earth : " Now have I proved my mother's words." ¹

The ballad of the sister rescued from a tyrannical husband is found in Denmark and the other northern countries,² not here. In the northern versions there is a horse, and a raven, mysterious helpers, who are not in the southern story. It is thought that the southern versions are all derived from the misfortunes of Clotilde,

¹ From Olrik's version, in " Danish Ballads selected " (*Danske Folkeviser i Udvalg*). In *D.g.F.* 58 there is a longer version of the same story ; the shorter form is found in Arwidsson's Swedish ballads, No. 136, with a variant where it is his betrothed, not his sister, that is shot.

² *D.g.F.* 62, *Blåk og Ravn hin brune*.

daughter of Clovis : notes and references are given by Nigra, p. 35 (*La Sorella Vendicata*).

A very common southern ballad is that of the prisoner singing and changing the mind of his jailer by the power of his song.¹ It is a favourite story in Denmark, with different settings.² In one of them the hero is a deer-stealer : and though it is found only in modern oral tradition in Jutland it keeps a trace of the cross-bow and bolt, which proves it to be fairly ancient.³ Another ballad found both in old manuscript books and in modern tradition has the same sort of ending.⁴ Though the power of song is well enough known in the ballads of this country, in *Glasgerion* for instance, this use of it is apparently not found here, any more than the magic song recorded in the romance of Count Arnaldos, which is the glory of the ballads of Spain. No other people have equalled that good fortune *over the waters of the sea*.⁵

But there is another sea-ballad, in which the magic singing comes again, a simpler thing than *Arnaldos*, which is unknown in English and common in Denmark and the southern group. It is a cheerful story, something like the Gaberlunzie Man who becomes "the brawest gentleman that was amang them a'." Here, however, the young woman is otherwise carried off ; drawn on board ship by the enchanting song of the captain (called Valivan in Norway and Sweden), who afterwards declares himself as the king's son of England

¹ Nigra, No. 47, p. 284 ; French, Catalan, and Portuguese equivalents there referred to.

² Kristensen, *Jyske Folkeminder*, ii. No. 6 ; *D.g.F.* 384.

³ *D.g.F.* 292.

⁴ A. Olrik in *D.g.F.* vi. 1, p. 467.

⁵ *D.g.F.* 241 ; cf Nigra, No. 44, *Il marinaio*, and references.

(it may be) or in some other way distinguished ; at any rate an honourable man.¹

Another sea ballad with the same curious distribution is that which is scarcely known in England except in the irreverent shape of *Little Billee*. The French had begun to take it lightly before Thackeray translated it :

Il était un petit navire
Qui n'avait jamais navigué.

But there are other forms of a ballad where the horrors of starving at sea are viewed more grimly, with a curious variety of endings, between the Portuguese *Nau Catharineta*,² the Provençal *Moussi*,³ the Norwegian and the Icelandic ballads.⁴

One of the strongest and most remarkable of the southern ballads, *Donna Lombarda*, the story of which is supposed to have come from the life of Rosamund, is to be found in Denmark ; in this country there is no vestige of it beyond a very uncertain and incidental likeness in Old Robin of Portugal.⁵

Other examples might be given. The ballad of *Babylon* or *The Bonnie Banks of Fordie* ⁶ is very like a favourite northern ballad, *Sir Truels's Daughters* : ⁷

“ Enten vil i vaere tre Røveres Viv,
eller og i vil lade jert unge Liv ?
Nei hverken vil vi vaere tre Røveres Viv,
heller vi vil og lade vores unge Liv.”

¹ *D.g.F.* 241 ; cf. *Nigra*, No. 44, *Il marinaro*, and references.

² Hardung, *Romanceiro Portuguez* i. p. 21. Cf. Puymaigre, *Choix de vieux chants portugais* (1881), p. 173 sqq.

³ Arbaud, i. p. 127.

⁴ S. Bugge, *Gamle Norske Folkeviser (dei freearlause menn) ; Islenszk Fornkvæði*, No. 6 (*Kaupmanna kv.*).

⁵ *Nigra* No. 1 ; *D.g.F.* 345, where there is an elaborate discussion by Dr. Olrik of the whole subject.

⁶ *Child*, No. 14.

⁷ *D.g.F.* 338.

He's tane the first sister by her hand,
 Eh vow bonnie.
 And he's turned her round and made her stand
 On the bonnie banks o' Fordie.

" It's whether will ye be a rank robber's wife,
 Or will ye die by my wee penknife? "

" It's I'll not be a rank robber's wife,
 But I'll rather die by your wee penknife."

He's killed this maid and he's laid her by,
 For to bear the red rose company.

In the Scottish ballad, the outlaw, the robber, is proved to be the brother of the three maids. In the Danish, this is the story also, in some versions ; there are three robbers living so long in outlawry that they have lost all knowledge of their relations ; they murder their three sisters, and are detected afterwards in their father's house, where they learn what they have done, and who they are themselves. But another version is also common (Danish, Faroese, Icelandic), which has no such *recognition*, only *detection*, in the house to which they go after the murder, and where they are discovered by the " red gold," or the jewels, which they have taken from the murdered girls. This is the plot of a common southern ballad,¹ French, Italian, Provençal ; which has nothing of the recognition found in the other Danish and the Scotch ballad, and, it may be said, not much of the beauty of either.

Here again, even though Scotland is represented, there appears to be a closer relation between Denmark and France.

¹ Nigra, 12 ; Arbaud, *La Doulento*.

III

The comparative strength of the French influence among the Danish ballads may easily be overrated in one way. It is clear that no complete evidence as to the range of ballad-poetry is to be gained from either Child or Grundtvig; they give no more than what is extant, and what is extant is not everything. Many ballads have been lost, along with the *Tale of Wade*, and the story known to Gawain Douglas, *How the Wren came out of Ailsay*. Denmark has many extant ballads with plots common to Denmark and France, and now unknown in Scotland or England. That can be proved; but it cannot be proved that those gaps among the Scottish ballads have been there always; that there never existed in English a ballad of the mother's return from the dead, or of the prisoner's harp-playing. The proof only touches the extant ballad literature, and any of the instances given above might be happily refuted to-morrow by the discovery of some old note-book with rhymes in it.

The relation of Denmark and France, however, goes beyond the matter of the ballads, and hardly any new discovery, in addition to Child's collection, could possibly give to the English and Scotch ballads the same proportion of southern forms and qualities as are found in the Danish. Whatever might be added to the stock of ballads, there would remain in English the large number that have parted with their over-word, and this fashion of refrain, all but absolutely universal in the Danish ballads, is the plainest mark of French origin.

Refrains, burdens, were known in the ancient northern poetry, as in Anglo-Saxon; it would be

strange if this common thing were lacking in any age. But the ballad refrains of Denmark, like those of the Icelandic *danz*, are after a French original, and so close to it that an Icelandic ballad stave—a Danish ballad in Icelandic—is cited by Jeanroy,¹ as reproducing in a striking manner the rules of the old French *rondet*. The ballad quoted is one of those already mentioned among the stories familiar in France—the sailors' ballad, *La Courte Paille*. It looks as if the Icelandic ballad had preserved both plot and form of an old importation from France and Denmark.

The ordinary double refrain, already mentioned as common to the English and Danish ballads, is derived from the same kind of old French poetry; the Icelandic ballad noticed by Jeanroy is only an exceptionally accurate repetition of the French device. All the interpolated refrains—"Eh vow bonnie"; "Aye as the gowans grow gay"; "With a hey ho, the wind and the rain," etc.—are from the French School. Here there is small difference in practice between this country and Denmark. But there is a peculiar kind of ballad verse in Denmark, not used in the same way in English, which seems to have come from French lyric poetry, and helps to prove that the Danes made more out of their poetical commerce with France than any other nation did, in respect of their ballads at any rate.

This verse is exceedingly beautiful, and some of the finest things are composed in it—the ballad of *Sivard and Brynhild*,² of *Aage and Alse*,³ and the Icelandic ballad of *Tristram*,⁴ which is perhaps in northern ballad-poetry what the romance of the Count Arnaldos is

¹ *Origines de la poésie lyrique en France*, p. 415.

² *D.g.F.* 3.

³ *D.g.F.* 90.

⁴ *Islenszk Fornkv.*, No. 23.

among those of the Latin race, and that although everything in it is borrowed : “ only a duplicate.”

Isodd heim frá sjónum gengur,
gatan var þraung :
einatt heyrði hun klukknahtjóð,
og fagran saung.

Isodd heim frá sjónum gengur,
gatan er bein :
einatt heyrði hún klukknahtjóð.
á veginum þeim.

Til orða tók hun bjarta Isodd,
búin með seim :
“ Eigi skyldi hann Tristram dauður,
er eg kem heim.”

Prestar stóðu, á gólfinu,
með kertaljós :
drottningin niður að líki laut,
svo rauð sem rós.

Margur þolir í heiminum
svo sára nauð :
drottningin niður að líkinu laut,
og lá þar dauð.

Prestar stoðu á gólfinu,
og sungu psálm :
þa var hringt yfir báðum líkum
Rínar málm.

þeim var ekki skapað nema að skilja
(Nothing for them was shapen but to sunder).

Iseult goes from the sea inland
(The street was long) ;
And ever she heard the bells ringing,
The goodly song.

Iseult goes from the sea inland
(The street was strait) ;
And ever she heard the bells ringing,
As she came thereat.

Then she spake, the fair Iseult,
 From over the foam :
 " Nay, but Tristram should not die
 When I come home."

Out on the floor the priests were standing,
 With tapers fair ;
 Queen Iseult came where Tristram lay,
 And knelt there.

To many a man in the world is given
 Sorrow and pain ;
 The queen knelt down and died there, Iseult,
 Where he lay slain.

Out on the floor the priests they stood,
 Their dirges said :
 The bells of gold were rung for Iseult
 And Tristram dead.

(Nothing for them was shapen but to sunder.)

The scheme of this verse is a familiar one in English, and it is used in popular lyric poetry, though not in the ballads. It comes in German poetry also, and loses nothing of its grace ; there are certain kinds of verse that seldom go wrong ; they keep their true nature in any language :

" O burmans sön, lat röselin stan !
 se sint nicht din ;
 Du drechst noch wol van nettelkrut
 ein krenzelin."

Dat nettelkrut is het und bitter,
 it brennet ser ;
 Vorlaren hebb ik min schönes lef,
 it rüwet mi ser ¹

—the very tone of the ballad of Iseult.

¹ Uhland, No. 252.

Now this is found in the ballad poetry of the Romance tongues pretty frequently: in French, Italian, Catalan, etc.

Allons au bois, charmante brune,
allons au bois !
Nous trouverons le serpent verde,
nous le tuerons.¹

This French ballad is on the same story as the Italian *Donna Lombarda*, which has the same form of verse :

" Amei-me mi, dona Lombarda
amei-me mi."
" O cume mai volì che fassa,
che j'ò'l mari." ²

This stave is found in old French poetry in various combinations, one of them specially interesting, because it is the well-known stanza of Burns, which appears itself to have been originally a ballad measure of the old sort used in *caroles*. The well-known form—three lines and a half, then one and a half—is explained in the following way. The second line was originally the first refrain, and the one and a half concluding the stanza are the second part of the refrain, as in the old example analysed by Jeanroy (p. 412) :

Main se leva bele Aeliz,
(Dormez jalous ge vos en pri)
Biau se para, miex se vesti,
Desoz le raim :
(Migno tement la voi venir,
Cele que j'aim).

¹ Rolland, No. cclix. ; iii. p. 10.

² Nigra, 1. ; also in Rolland, *loc. cit.*, immediately following the French version. Note that in the Italian each short phrase is repeated : " Amei-me mi, amei-me mi "—as in " The robin to the wren's nest cam keekin in, cam keekin in." But this repeating is not universal ; the French tune, *e.g.*, does not repeat "allons au bois" in the stanza quoted.

The concluding lines, "Biau se para," etc., are thus a metrical period by themselves, following the first refrain, and the form of them is easily detached and made into an independent stanza, which is that of the French ballad, *Allons au bois*, and of the Danish *Sivard*, the Icelandic *Tristram*.

It is possible to go further, and to find in southern ballad-poetry not only the abstract scheme of verse, but verse and words agreeing to the same effect as in the north. The Icelandic poem of *Tristram* has repeated a common ballad motive, of the lover coming too late and hearing the funeral bells. It is given in Italian, in verse essentially the same as that of the *Tristramskvaði*.

In *Il Giovane Soldato*,¹ a ballad of Pontelagoscuro in Emilia, a young soldier asks leave of his captain to go home and see his betrothed, who is lying sick. He arrives only in time to hear the bells and meet the procession; and this rustic Italian ballad has the same mode of verse as the northern poem of Iseult:

Quand l'è sta arent al castello,
 Al sentiva sunar :
 Questo l'è al son dla miè cara mrosa,
 Son drèe a purtar.

Fermito là o ti la purtantina,
 Riposat un po :
 Ch' a daga un basin a la miè mrosa,
 E po me n'andarò.

Parla, parla, bochetta dorà,
 Rispondam un po—
 Ma cosa vot, se liè l'è morta ?
 Parlart la non pol.

"When he came to his town he heard the bells ringing.
 'They are ringing for my own dear love; they are coming

¹ Ferraro, *Canti popolari di Ferrara*, etc., 1877.

after with her bier. Stay there, set down the bier ; rest a little, that I may give a kiss to my love, and then I will go away. Speak, speak, mouth of my love, answer me a little.'"

The friends say :

"What wilt thou, when she is dead ? She cannot speak to thee."

This is poetry also : a common motive no doubt, but it can hardly be mere coincidence that brings the south and north so close together as in these two ballads, in spite of the long interval of time, and the distance between Iceland and Italy.

IV.

The great difficulty with the Danish ballads (as with the English) is to understand how the imported French poetical forms came to be adapted so thoroughly, not only to render northern themes—there is nothing so strange in that—but to carry on the most ancient popular fashions of thought and imagination.

Nothing in the form of the Danish ballads is national or northern. Even the habit of alliteration, which might naturally enough have been carried from the old northern verse into the new rhymes, is allowed to drop, not only in Denmark,¹ but largely also in the Icelandic ballads, though in all other Icelandic verse, to the present day, the old prescription of the three alliterative syllables is retained. But while the change from Northern to Romance forms is carried out so thoroughly, the Danish ballads lose nothing of their home-bred quality in other respects : there is nothing artificial or foreign about their matter or spirit ; they are in a foreign kind of verse, but their ideas, their

¹ Steenstrup, *Vore Folkeviser*, pp. 125-137.

manners, are in some respects more ancient than the poems of the "Elder Edda." Some of those have been called ballads, indeed, by the editors of the Oxford *Corpus Poeticum*, and there are many points of likeness. The old poem of the *Fetchings of Thor's Hammer* is much the same in scale and method as the later rhyming ballad on the same story.¹ But the rhyming ballads are fond of antique simple things which the more careful poems of the "Elder Edda" have rejected, *e.g.* the old tricks or repetition, found all over the world wherever poets are not too high-minded or artificial :

Aft ha'e I ridden thro' Striveling town
Thro' heavy wind and weat ;
But ne'er rade I thro' Striveling town
Wi' fetters on my feet.

Aft hae I ridden thro' Striveling town
Thro' heavy wind and rain ;
But ne'er rade I thro' Striveling town
But thought to ridden't again.

—*Young Waters*, Buchan's version.

There are figures of repetition, it is true, in the old heroic poetry, but they are not of this sort ; the repetitions in the Danish ballads are exactly of this sort, the very same thing in all but the language.² As "wind and weat" is changed to "wind and rain" in *Young Waters*, so for instance "earth" and "mould" are changed in Danish ; "Queen Bengerd lies in the black earth, and the good man keeps his ox and cow ; Queen Bengerd lies under the black mould, and

¹ *D.g.F.* No. 1.

² Cf. Gummere, *The Beginnings of Poetry*, p. 197, *sqq.*, on ballad repetition. There appears to be a good specimen of this kind of rhetoric in the Babylonian *Descent of Ishtar* ; as there are many in the *Tristram* ballad, quoted above.

every maid has her red gold still. *Wo worth Queen Bengerd!*"¹

Did the Danes and the English borrow such things from the French, along with the ballad verse and the music? If so, the result is wonderful, for nowhere else is there any such borrowing, with so little of the look of artifice about it, with an effect so purely natural and national. It is more wonderful in Denmark than in this country, though the general lines are the same in both: an adoption of foreign modes to express home-grown ideas, a revival of all the primitive simple ways of poetry in new fangled poetical shapes, introduced from a foreign nation, and this, be it observed, after England and the Scandinavian countries had both of them had centuries of practice in the Teutonic alliterative verse, the verse of *Beowulf* and of the "Elder Edda."

The paradox is more striking in Denmark than in England and Scotland. England was nearer to France, much more closely related; the English tongue derived also a great many other things besides ballads from France, and ballads here never had the relative importance they had in Denmark. There—and this is the peculiar interest of the Danish ballads, historically speaking—the common ballad form had not to compete at such a disadvantage as in England or in Germany with more elaborate and courtly kinds of literature; so it grew into the national form of poetry—not merely

¹ Queen Bengerd had been exacting contributions:

Nu ligger Bengerd i sorten Jord,
end har Bonden baade Okse og Ko:

Nu ligger Bengerd under sorten Muld,
end har hver Mø sit røde Guld:

Ve da vorde hende Bengerd!

popular, but national, capable of any matter or any idea known to any order of men in the kingdom—not a rustic, but a noble kind of literature. Gentle ladies took care of it, before it sank again to the “knitters in the sun,” or rather the knitters in the dark cabins of Jutland, from whom Kristensen learned so much in different ways.¹ The ballad form in Denmark is used for something nearer true epic than is found in the ballads of France or even in Scotland; for heroic lays on business of greater moment than Otterbourne. The Danish ballads of the death of King Eric Klipping, or of Niels Ebbeson’s stroke at the German Count, are heroic poems of a new kind, thriving in the fourteenth century after the older medieval epic forms are exhausted.

¹ See Mr. W. A. Craigie’s article on *Evald Tang Kristensen* in *Folklore*, September, 1898. Mr. Kristensen’s work as a collector of popular traditions has scarcely its equal anywhere; though many of the old sources have perished, he still keeps on making discoveries. He has lately brought out a volume of comic ballads, in addition to the four that contain what is left—or what was left forty years ago—of the heroic ballads of West Jutland.

XXVI

ON THE DANISH BALLADS. II

ONE great difficulty about the ballads is to understand how they have kept so many of the old fashions of poetry along with so much that is new. Their matter and phrasing are in many respects very ancient. Yet the ballads of Northern and Western Europe are not among the oldest poetical remains; they are centuries later than the old heroic poems in alliterative blank verse, such as *Beowulf* or the poems of the "Elder Edda"; and they are not only later than these, but they are cut off from them by one of the most decisive revolutions in history—the change from the old alliterative verse to the rhyming measures introduced from France. English and Danish, they have alike forsaken the old national Teutonic forms and taken up the French modes, which came in along with the new dances (*Caroles*) in the twelfth century. But the new ballad measures—the French measures—are often used for very old themes, and always with very old devices of expression. How is one properly to understand this poetic growth, in some things so ancient, in metre and rhyme so absolutely new? The difficulty comes out most clearly when the ballads are compared with Anglo-Saxon poetry or with the "Elder Edda." There

are no extant Anglo-Saxon ballads ; and though the heroic poems of the " Elder Edda " are like ballads in many things, they are much more ambitious and self-conscious, much more literary, than the *Folkeviser*. How is one to account for the change ?

Part of the answer is that the change is there, whether you explain it or not ; there is one order of poetry in *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, another in the volumes of Grundtvig or Child. The difference is one that spreads further, and is found everywhere when the tenth century is compared with the thirteenth or fourteenth. No change in the course of history, no Renaissance or Reformation, is so momentous for England and the Northern nations as the change from the older, more purely Teutonic ideas to those of later medieval Christendom, and great part of this revolution is implied in the change of language from an older to a newer type (from " Anglo-Saxon " to " Middle English ") and in the gradual adoption at the same time of Romance poetry in place of the older German.

This revolution meant progress in some ways, but not universally in all. A great deal was lost and damaged. The Teutonic civilisation of the North had gone far on lines of its own, *e.g.* it had its own systems of grammar and rhetoric, and used them intelligently to good purpose ; it had its own ideals of freedom, decency, and the religion fit for a gentleman. Then came a French conquest of the North, which did not need any political Norman conquest to carry it through. The University of Paris, the French romances that King Hacon of Norway admired, the new carols, the doctrine of courtesy—these and many other tides and influences made a new world of the North ; the ideas of the " later Iron Age " were discomfited, even in

Iceland, though they are still to be found there, *sub specie aeternitatis*, in the glory of the Sagas. The Northern nations were severely tried by the change, particularly those which had invested most of their capital in the old order of things, viz. Norway and Iceland. In these countries it might almost seem as if their devotion to the old Germanic ideas of freedom had brought down upon them the Prince of this World and his vengeance. Norway, just after it had seemed to be one of the great powers, a strong new monarchy under Hacon, went practically out of existence, and from its high politics, its diplomatic correspondence with France, Castile, and Aragon, sank back to its own firths and valleys and the secular business of timber and codfish, giving up the great game for many hundred years. In Denmark and Sweden political life was vastly stronger, but there was no great strength in literature—apart from the ballads. If the ballads are inferior—as they certainly are inferior in ambition and conscious art—to the old Northern poetry, this may be only part of the general depression of spirit which is noticeable in other respects in the North, from the thirteenth century onward—*e.g.* in the dying-out of the Icelandic historians; the sterility of authorship in Denmark, after the time of Saxo; the greed and anarchy of the Swedish nobles, and the passive acceptance of Germanic intrusion in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.¹

In other parts of history also one hears of emptiness and exhaustion at the close of the Middle Ages, and the decline of Northern literature is not the only thing of the sort. Provençal poetry died about the same time

¹ Cf. Sars, *Udsigt over den norske Historie*, part 3, *passim*, and especially c. i., on the Hanseatic usurpations.

as Icelandic prose ; and in Germany, too, after the glories of the Hohenstaufen age there begins the great dearth and monotony where few explorers find their way.

But the ballads are not to be compared with the things that are merely decrepit in the later Middle Ages, the flat moralities, the droning romances, the unceasing, meaningless rhymes. Though they are often childish and illiterate, and touched with the common weaknesses, they are not simply degraded versions of old noble legends, and they cannot be understood by means of any such theory.

They have somehow or other discovered for themselves a form of poetry which is alive, and quite unlike the tedious reiterations, "abortives of the fabulous dark cloister," which are so common towards the end of the Middle Ages—Pastimes of Pleasure, and other such misnamed and miscreated things. It is a lyrical form, and, though it was a borrowed form from France, it seems to have taken up, like a graft rose on a briar, the strength of an obscure primitive stock of life, so that the English and the Danes and their kindred were able to sing their own native thoughts and fancies to the French tunes. This may sound mysterious, but it cannot be helped. A mystery may be a positive fact, like any other.

To get at something rather more definite, we may try to classify the ballads—to distinguish between (1) the ballads that have something like them in older Northern tradition, before the introduction of the French ballad measures, such, *e.g.* as *Hagbard and Signy* or the *Finding of Thor's Hammer* ; (2) the ballads that are most closely related to the Southern group, French, Provençal, etc. (*v. S.H.R.* i. p. 336) ; (3a) the

ballads that are suggested by real events, like *Chevy Chase*; and (3*b*) the ballads that take their plots in a vaguer and less historical way from real life, such as those of cattle-raiding on the Border, or of combats, e.g. *Johnnie of Braidislee*, or of daring lovers, like *Lochinvar*—very numerous in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.¹

1. There is no absolute separation between the older poetry, represented in the North by the "Elder Edda," and the later rhyming ballads. Some of the ballads repeat stories that are found in the older poetry, or that are known from Saxo Grammaticus to have existed once in an older form; particularly the ballad of *Thor's Hammer*, which corresponds to the *Lay of Thrym* in the "Elder Edda," and has been studied and illustrated in great detail by two eminent Norwegian scholars;² the ballad of *Child Sveidal*, which corresponds to two old Northern poems; and *Hagbard and Signy*, a story given by Saxo, and lately described by Dr. Axel Olrik in a fine essay³ bringing out the difference between the older heroic and the later romantic way of looking at the same matter.

This sort of transposition or translation from an older to a newer poetic form is well known in Germany in the rhyming versions of old heroic themes; in the North also the story of Sigurd and Brynhild passes into rhyme, not with the broad diffuse narrative eloquence of the *Nibelungenlied*, but in the proper mode of the lyrical ballad.

¹ There are symptoms of cross-division in this, but less than might be thought; the cross-cutting is chiefly between groups (2) and (3*b*), and most of it can be cured.

² S. Bugge and Moltke Moe, *Torsvæsen i sin norske Form*, 1897.

³ *Tilskueren*, 1907, p. 57 sqq.

There is so little extant of the old Northern heroic poetry—it all goes easily into one volume—that one may fancy there once were ancient versions of other ballad plots as well, and there are still traces of some of them. The *Hávamál* includes among the adventures of Odin one where he is not triumphant, but defeated as shamefully as the *Baffled Knight* of later comic tradition.¹ It is a strange place to find a story which would seem to be more at home in its later dress and situation, in D'Urfey's *Pills to Purge Melancholy*. But there are several other documents which prove that *fabliau* plots were well appreciated in the older German days, long before the French or the Italians took to writing comic stories. There are old German-Latin pieces with Swabian japes in them, and these, with the Latin *Unibos*,² which is *Big Claus and Little Claus*, make it fairly certain that there were many other such things, many more things known and current than ever were put down in writing, and more things written than we know of. "This may seem to be a truism, but it is nevertheless true," as the man said in the Schools; it is a commonplace which is sometimes ignored by literary antiquarians, who will argue freely (on occasion) that things not extant can never have existed.

The earlier books of Saxo, founded on poems and stories—Danish and Icelandic—about the year 1200, show what a rich amount of romantic stuff was available then, just at the time when the new carol and ballad fashion was coming in from France. We know that some of his stories—*Hagbard and Signy*, e.g.—appear

¹ See Child's *Ballads*, No. 112; *Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser*, 230, 231.

² Grimm and Schmeller, *Lateinische Gedichte des X. und XI. Jh.* 1838.

as ballads ; it is at least possible that other ballads come from old poems which existed in Saxo's time, though they are not included in his history.

So the origin of some of the ballads may be explained, as translation from the old Northern heroic age to the fashion of the new poetry, the rhyming verse and its refrain which came in along with the French *Caroles*.

In Icelandic books of the thirteenth century one can see, here and there, how the two fashions meet. The new way is exemplified in the *Sturlunga Saga*, in rhyming phrases quoted there, in the ballad burden :

mínar eru sorgir þungar sem blý.

While at the same time the kind of verse is readily used, for all purposes. There was a time when the popular songs of Norway were in Scaldic verse—precise, artificial. King Sverre quoted one of them, ironically and most effectively, on the lukewarm politics of Norway :

ætla-ek mér ina mæro
munnfagra Jórinni
hvegi er fundr með frægjom
ferr Magnúsi ok Sverri

—which, roughly, might be rhymed thus :

Let Magnus and Sverre debate as they will,
But the lips of Jorunn have my love still.

Sverre, the amazing person of genius—who might, one imagines, have talked on equal terms with either Cromwell or Charles II.—Sverre rather enjoyed this lyrical epigram on his own most serious affairs ; he could stand aside from his own game, even when everything was at stake, and watch the temper of the average Norwegian man who did not care for politics. He had tags of poetry in his mind ; at another time he

quotes one of the old poems of Sigurd. There are about forty years between Sverre's Scaldic quotation and the Icelandic satirical rhymes on Lopt and Sæmund (1221), which show the new fashion coming in :

Lopt is in the islands
Picking the puffin's bone,
Sæmund in the highlands
—Blaeberries alone.

About forty years later still (1264) comes the ballad refrain already quoted. So one gets, roughly, some few signs of the meeting and rivalry of the two orders, the native old Northern and the new foreign measures—much as one sees the old-fashioned Danish battle-axe giving way to the lance of the new chivalry.

2. The close connection between the Danish (also the English and Scottish) ballads and those of the Southern group—French, Provençal, Catalan, North Italian—is undeniable, and also very hard to explain. One difficulty is that the Southern ballad stories are generally rather late—springing up at the close of the Middle Ages—though of course the lyrical form, song and refrain, is much older. Where is one to find the course of the stream that brought the French ballads to Scotland and Denmark, but not in anything like the same number to Germany?

Some curious things are ascertainable about other streams and tides of ballad-poetry. The Danish ballads of German origin have been distinguished, and the proofs of their descent made easily intelligible; and there is at least one specimen of a Russian story wandering West, to Sweden and Denmark, and keeping the name Novgorod in it as a sign of its origin.¹ But the

¹ *D.g.F.* 468; *Arwidsson* No. 25; cf. *Child's* introduction to No. 266, *John Thomson and the Turk*.

likenesses of Danish and French ballads are as obvious as their pedigrees are obscure. It may indeed be taken for granted that the pedigree is not to be sought in Denmark. For the character of the Southern ballads, and of their counterparts among the Northern groups, is in some respects different from the ballads that belong peculiarly to the North, whether to the Scottish border or to Denmark. They are generally much vaguer—more childish, more dreamy, one might say—than our ballads. The actors are often nameless—simply the mother and her children, or the daughter of the king ; and often where there is a name, Marguerite, Renaud, Pernette, it tells nothing particular. The ballads of the North have much more of an historical look about them, to say the least. A large number are actually founded on real historical events. Many of them, especially in Denmark, are concerned with a world in which serious political and civil business is understood—something like the world of the Icelandic Sagas (as may be seen later), with grand juries, wardship and marriage, trespass, the law of landlord and tenant. Of all this there is little trace in the South.¹ There is not the substantial background of real interests that there is in the Border ballads, in the *Geste of Robin Hood* and, very commonly, in Denmark. Their ambitions—the kind of life and scenery they imply—are much more like those of the simpler fairy tales.

Now ballads of this sort are fortunately known in the North also ; and it will be found, as we might expect, that where there are correspondences between

¹ That is, in the French group of ballads : the Castilian ballads have a character and history of their own.

French and English (or Danish) ballads, they generally fall within this order.

The vaguer, less historical-looking ballad is certainly an old kind ; it is closely related to other old lyrical families where there are personages not named by any definite name, like the shepherdesses in the *pastourelles*, or the lady and her lover in the *aubades*, and the watchman on the tower. One is led to ask whether the French ballads may not be older than the end of the Middle Ages, to which the best authority, that of Gaston Paris, assigns them—whether it may not be a plausible thing to suppose that the ballad fashion was understood in France, at least as early as in Scotland or Denmark. The common opinion seems to be that while the *carole* form—song and refrain and dance—came up in the twelfth century, it was at first and for a long time used without any definite story ; merely with sentiments and ideas :

When that I was a little tiny boy.

According to this theory, the *carole* form remained purely lyrical in France, and the narrative or epic use of it began among foreigners, whether English or Danish or other—anyhow not in France. It is noted¹ that in Iceland the original French lyrical type was kept pure from narrative, in contrast to the fashions of Denmark.

On the other hand, it is remarkable what a close likeness may be found between some of the late French ballads and some of the oldest French narrative poetry. There are many ballad features in the *Chansons de Geste*, particularly in the oldest. For example, the old

¹ *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, ii. 389 : lyrical *danz* separate from the epic *vísur*.

French epic of *Le Roi Gormond* is written in a kind of verse that has survived for centuries ; it is just the same in the old epic and in the traditional ballad that Gérard de Nerval heard and wrote down, in *Les Filles du Feu*, of St. Nicholas and the three children :

Il était trois petits enfants
Qui s'en allaient glaner aux champs.

And the epic, like the ballad, has a refrain :

Quant il ot mort le bon vassal
Ariere en chaça le cheval ;
Puis mist avant sun estendart
Nen la li baille un tuenart.¹

The lately discovered *Chançon de Willame*, the rude original of the epic of *Aliscans*, has many ballad devices in it. It has a refrain, with variations, e.g. :

Lunsdi al vespre
En bataille reneiad Deu celestre
—Joesdi al vespre
Nad que xv. anz si li donad grant terre.

And even nearer to the common ballad type are the repetitions in *Willame*. The *Chansons de Geste*, like the ballads generally, are fond of repeating the same thing in different phrases ; only there is this difference, that the epics take more time about it ; they move more slowly in larger circles, and we may have thirty or forty lines or more, before the period comes round again. The ballad repetitions come quickly—after two lines, or four—and in this old epic *Willame*, for

¹ *Le Roi Gormond*, ed. Scheler, l. 4, 37, 61, 83, etc. *Nen* is "Naismes" and *tuenart* = "shield."

once, the periods are short and more like those of the ballads, *e.g.* :

Si cum li ors ses viere fors del argent
Si sen eslistrent tote le bone gent
Li couart sen vont od Tedbald fuiant
Od Vivien remistrent tuit li chevaler vaillant
Al chief devant fierent comunalment.

Si cum li ors del argent sen turne
Si sen eslistrent tut li gentil home,
etc. (l. 327 sqq.).

This play of the gold and silver, with the things put in different order when they are repeated, is exactly like the ballad convention : ¹

Now shalt thou never yelp, Wrennok,
 At ale ne at wine
 That thou hast slawe good Robin
 And his knave Gandeleyne.

Now shalt thou never yelp, Wrennok,
 At wine ne at ale
 That thou hast slawe good Robin
 And Gandeleyne his knave.

A later passage is still more lyrical, and it is one of the fine things in the poem : Girard cursing his useless weapons (l. 715 sqq.) :

Ohi grosse hanste cume peises al braz
 Nen aidera a Uiuien en larchamp
 Qui se combat a dolerus ahan
 —Dunc la lance Girard en mi le champ.

Ohi grant targe cume peises al col
 Nen aidera a Uiuien a la mort
 [Qui se combat]
 —El champ la getad si la tolid de sun dos.

¹ *V. Scottish Historical Review*, i. p. 376, and Gummere, *The Beginnings of Poetry*, and *The Popular Ballad*, *passim*.

Ohi bone healme cum mestunes la teste
 Nen aiderai a Uiuien en la presse
 Ki se cumbat el archamp sur lerbe
 —Il le lancad et ietad cuntre terre.

Ohi grant broine cum me vas apesant
 Nen aiderai a Uiuien en larchamp
 Qui se combat a dolerus ahan
 —Trait lad de sun dos sil getad el champ.

So much at least we can say : that whether or not there were ballads like *Saint Nicolas* or *Le Roi Renaud* in France in the twelfth century, there were at that time in France all the elements wanted for ballad poetry as it is found in later ages. There were the metres, the refrains, the dances ; and there was also, as is proved by these examples from *Gormond* and *Willame*, the habit of using lyrical ornament and ballad graces along with narrative poetry.

Further than that it is perhaps hardly safe to go. The great difficulties of the problem are there still, in the want of any early French originals for the later ballads : " we know not all the pathways."

3. Much has been done recently in Denmark for the philology of the ballads, which is part of their history. Dr. Axel Olrik and Dr. Ernst von der Recke (to both of whom I am deeply indebted in many ways) have studied the vocabulary of certain ballads and brought out some notable results.¹ It is not my purpose here to describe these in full, but to call attention to one particular inference of Dr. Olrik's which has special

¹ Ernst von der Recke, *Nogle folkeviseredaktioner*, 1906. Dr. Recke has made a collection (unpublished) of all the parallel passages in the Danish ballads—an immense work, on which he has based his reconstruction of some of the poems. His *Folkevisestudier* (in *Danske Studier*, 1907) call attention to Faroese elements in Danish ballads, thus proving some fresh things about the Western influence in Denmark, of which little is certainly known.

interest for readers in this country, and some importance for the history of historical ballads, though the ballad in question (*Riboldsvisen*=*Earl Brand*) is not historical in the same way as *Chevy Chase*.

The Danish ballad of *Ribold* has long been known as one that has the closest relation with an English version. The ballad of *Earl Brand* goes beyond the mere identity of *plot*, and in one instance uses the same *rhymes* in the same place as the Northern versions.¹ Now Dr. Olrik in a comparison of different versions of the Northern ballad—Icelandic, Norwegian, Danish²—is able to determine certain rhymes in the old Danish language as the originals from which the various dialects have chosen their own peculiar forms; these dialects often wresting the sense when the sounds fail them. Thus the Icelandic versions derived from the Danish have to alter the Danish endings when they do not give the proper Icelandic rhyme; on the other hand, the Icelandic versions have sometimes kept the likeness of old Danish inflexions which disappeared pretty early from the Danish language. It seems to Dr. Olrik possible that the ballad may have been first composed among Danes of North England in the twelfth century, and transplanted thence to the home countries, Denmark and Norway.

This opinion will perhaps be found surprising and unacceptable by English historians who are not accustomed to the Danish estimate of the ballads—to the high rank and the antiquity that Danish, as compared with English writers, are ready to ascribe to the ballads. English scholars as a rule are disinclined to allow any very early date to the ballads. “Reliques,

¹ See Child, Introduction to *Earl Brand*, No. 7.

² *Danske Studier*, 1906, p. 40 *sqq.*, p. 175 *sqq.*

but not really very ancient," seems to be the common sentiment; *Robin and Gandeley*, which is fifteenth century, is comparatively old. But in Denmark the fifteenth century is late, and the best ballads are supposed to come from the thirteenth, or even earlier. As the principal Danish MS. authority for the ballads, the "Karen Brahe" folio, c. A.D. 1550, is only about a century older than Percy's MS., it would seem as if some justification or explanation were needed. It is not wanting, and the linguistic demonstration just referred to may be taken as part of the proof.

But the chief arguments are drawn from the historical ballads, of which there are many, and of such a sort that they must have come from an original direct impression, like *Chevy Chase* or *The Bonnie Earl of Murray*, and not from any versifying of the chronicles, like the ballad of King Leir. There are some very curious evidences of antiquity in Grundtvig's work on the historical ballads, which are mostly in his third volume.

Here is an example.¹ Some of the Danish ballads have a plot like *Lochinvar* or *Katharine Janfarie*—the story of the brave lover who carries off the bride from the craven (or simply respectable) bridegroom. Now this sort of adventure has actually happened more than once, as Landstad, the pious collector of the Thelemarken ballads, explains in one of his notes. If one comes upon a Danish ballad of this kind² with nothing peculiarly historical, nothing definite at all beyond the commonest names—Nilaus, Fru Mettelille, Herr Peder—naturally one is not drawn to look for a definite historical origin. It would seem absurd on the face of it: like going to St. Pancras Church to enquire for

¹ *D.g.F.* iii. p. 715.

² *D.g.F.* 180.

the graves of Lord Lovel and Lady Nancy Belle. But this same ballad in a Norwegian version has other names in it, and they are historical, though slightly damaged. The bridegroom is Torstein Davidson, the hero is Falkvord Lommansson—so in Thelemark ; and a Swedish ballad has Falken Albrektsson in the same story. Now Grundtvig shows that the Norwegian and Swedish tradition has preserved one historical fact which is lost in Danish. The true name is Folke Algotson or Lawman's son—*Dominus Folcho filius Domini Algoti Legiferi Vestgothorum*—who in March, 1288, carried off the lady Ingrid,¹ betrothed to David Thorsteinsson the Danish seneschal.

Besides the ballads that deal with important historical personages, kings and queens and dukes and marshals, there are the ballads which are historical in a different sense, as being at any rate founded on real life, and using no scenery, motives, or ideas but such as might be familiarly known in ordinary business by the audience of the ballads. This kind has been compared above to the Border ballads of cattle driving and the like—*Jamie Telfer, Parcy Reed*—not because the incidents are much alike, but because each group

¹ The historical ballads have long been the subject of investigation and description in Denmark ; the most convenient introductions to this part of history are those in Streenstrup, *Vore Folkeviser*, and in Axel Olrik's *Danske Folkeviser i Udvalg* (1899). English readers must prepare for shocks to their historical prejudices when they enter this ground with the guidance of these interpreters. Instead of the ballad chronology to which they are accustomed here, beginning perhaps with the Robin Hood quotation from *Piers Plowman*, they will find the Danish historical ballad already declining before *Piers Plowman* is begun. The adventure of Niels Ebbeson befell in April 1340 ; the ballad is not long after, and the ballad, good as it is, has some of the symptoms of old age ; there is rather more of prose alloy than in the best of the earlier ballads, and the lyrical refrain is wanting. "From about the year 1400," says Dr. Olrik, "the historical ballads fall off, both in number and in poetical value."

has the same sort of relation to actual life, and the same sort of difference from the more vague and fanciful poems, the fairy ballads. It is here—in the ballads that deal with familiar life, whatever may be the historical truth of their stories—that one gets to understand the class of people among whom the ballads were composed. Nothing could be clearer or more to the point than Dr. Olrik's description;¹ it may be supplemented from other historians.²

The Danish ballads do not belong to "the people" in the ordinary meaning of the term. They have come down to the common people, in those Jutland homes where so many of the old poems have been found surviving, but originally they belonged to the gentry—a gentry not absolutely cut off nor far removed from the simpler yeomen. A number of causes, the historians tell us, contributed to raise and establish in Denmark a strong and numerous class of small freeholders, who were thriving most about the date 1200, and who were naturally the chief patrons of the new French carol fashion and the chief audience for the new lyrical ballads. The ballad, instead of being a secondary or degenerate form of poetry in Denmark, is for a long time—from the twelfth to the fifteenth century—the principal, almost the only form. The ballads are not rude rustic travesties of older more dignified stories; though some, perhaps many, of the older stories may survive among the ballads. They are, for Denmark in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, what the

¹ *Danske Folkeviser i Udvalg, Indledning*; esp. p. 16 *sqq.*, "the scene of the ballads—the knight's garth," and p. 20 *sqq.*, "classes of society."

² Cf. Erslev, *Valdemarernes Storhedstid*, p. 199 *sqq.*, for the growth of the Danish Franklin class (*Herremænd*) in the time of Valdemar Seir (+1241); Steenstrup, *Danmarks Riges Historie*, i. p. 794 *sqq.*; Erslev, *ibid.* ii. p. 223 *sqq.*

older heroic lays of the "Poetic Edda" had been before them in the Northern lands, what the *Chansons de Geste* had been in France ; that is to say, the proper and sufficient form in which to put all the noblest stories and thoughts. The Danish ballads take the place of earlier heroic poetry ; they do the same sort of work, and receive the same sort of honour. This is what distinguishes them from the English and Scottish ballads as we know them, which with all their heroic character are never anything like the chief poetical form of their day, but have to compete with all sorts of more ambitious, more pretentious, literary forms. This is what makes the peculiar historical interest of the Danish ballads ; in Denmark the ballad flourished as it did nowhere else, *and was used as the form and vehicle of original heroic poetry*—with the applause and favour of the whole nation, but more especially of the country gentlemen and their families ; a favour that lasted, as we know, among the ladies of Denmark down to the seventeenth century at any rate.

The difference in literary conditions between England and Denmark in the Middle Ages between 1100 and 1600 is very marked. It may be described simply as the absence in Denmark of almost everything that makes the variety of English literature in those centuries. In Denmark, it is true, there are some rhyming romances, versions of the stories that everyone wanted in every land ; *Floris and Blanchefleur*, *Iwain the Knight of the Lion* ; but these were comparatively late of coming, and though they have a strong outward likeness to many English romances of the same date, this kind of fiction never had anything like the vogue that it had in England. There is nothing in Denmark

corresponding to the great English alliterative poems of the fourteenth century, nothing like the lovely English songs. There is not even any great supply of the cheapest and commonest medieval wares, the homilies, the moralisings, the popular expositions of science or history. The fact that Sir David Lyndesay's *Monarche* was translated into Danish rhyme seems to show how great the famine was. And so by this strange partiality of fortune the Danish ballad was left in possession of the ground, and of all the imaginative strength and substance to be found in the Danish people, gentle or simple.

What happens is so wonderful that one has to be cautious in describing it, for fear of seeming extravagant. It hardly seems a plausible thing at this time of day to believe in a Platonic idea of a ballad, a type remaining essentially the same, but repeating itself in various forms in this world of appearance. Yet this theory would account for the facts. There is something more in the ballad form than a mere pattern of verse or habit of phrasing. It includes, very often, the gift of original imagination ; new poetical things are made in the ballad form, utterly unlike the common medieval hackneyed repetitions, the interminable dreariness of professional romance.

To bring out, in English, anything like the value of the Danish ballads would require the finest poetical skill. Something much more prosaic is all that can be attempted here. Abstracts of stories are generally unreadable, but occasionally they may prove something. What is to be proved here is that the Danish ballads, besides all the themes that may have been inherited either from earlier heroic literature or from simple folk-lore, had the power of taking up new plots

from the Danish life of the Middle Ages. And, further, it may be argued that this originality of the ballads (which can be shown partially by means of abstracts) makes them much more important than they are generally considered among the orders of medieval poetry. There is something like a new spring of epic poetry here in Denmark in these new inventions of the ballad authors. They recall, with fresh stories, the talent for tragedy that is so strong in the poems of the "Elder Edda."¹ The adventures and incidents, the matter of the stories, will also be often found resembling the Icelandic Sagas, where the tragic spirit has other ways of going to work. It may be objected here, perhaps, that feuds and vengeance such as are the principal substance of the Icelandic Sagas and of many Danish ballads are too common over all the world to be particularly noticeable anywhere. But, on the contrary, the surprising thing about great tracts of medieval (and other) literature is that they fail to provide any good imaginative treatment of those common motives. They are well represented in the Sagas, in some of the *Chansons de Geste*, in many of the chroniclers in different languages, in the poems of *Bruce* and *Wallace*. But they are generally wanting, or poorly handled, in the great body of popular romance, the hackneyed stories of "Bevis and Sir Guy." The Danish ballads are very different from those poor strolling players of chivalry. Here follow the summaries of a few of them.

Nilus² is travelling home with his bride when they are caught in a storm in the heath, and have to look

¹ See Heusler, *Lied und Epos* (1905) and especially the description there of the *Marsh Stig* ballads.

² *Nilus og Hillelille*. *D.g.F.* 325; Olrik, *Udvalg*, No. 32, and introduction, p. 29.

for shelter. Hedingsholm is too far, Fredelund is nearer where the uncle of the bride lives, her mother's brother, Sir Peter. But Nilus has killed another of her uncles, and it is not safe to look for mercy from Sir Peter. However, they take this course. Sir Peter receives them, and reminds them of the blood-feud, but promises peace to Sir Nilus at the cost of the lives of his sister's sons, who are with him on the journey. It is a weakness in the story (to our ways of thinking) that Sir Nilus delays till his nephews are killed before he draws his sword ; because it is Sunday, and he has made a vow in the Holy Sepulchre not to draw his sword on a Sunday. But now he fights, hewing with his sword till it breaks at the hilt, and he gets his death-wound. Then he rides home, and his sister waits him at the gate. He tells her of the death of her two sons and of his own mortal wound, and asks her to be kind to his bride. " How can I be good to your bride," she answers, " when for her I have lost my two sons and my brother ? " Then Sir Nilus died, and his bride died with him.

De legte en Leg, og Legen var alt udaf Vrede : " They played a game, and the game was all of anger." So the refrain, as usual, interprets the sentiment of the poem.

*Liden Engel*¹ reminds one of the Icelandic stories of burning houses. Engel carries off Malfred in spite of her family, and is pursued by her brother the Lawman. He and she, and Engel's men along with them, who have eaten of his bread, take refuge in St. Mary's Church, and are besieged there ; then Malfred's mother advises the besiegers to burn the church. Malfred is saved ; those within place her on a

¹ *D.g.F.* 297 ; Olrik, *Udvalg*, No. 33.

shield and lift it with their spears to the church window, and so she escapes with her hair burnt and her clothes scorched; Engel and his men are left in the church.

Afterwards Malfred bears a son, who grows up and avenges his father. Refrain :

Mon ingen Dag vil oplyse ?

“ When will it be day ? ”

*Ebbe Skammelson*¹ begins like some of the Icelandic Sagas of rivalry, where the slow treacherous man wins the bride of the more adventurous. Here the rivals are two brothers. Peter gives out that his brother Ebbe is dead, and marries his brother's betrothed. Ebbe (warned like so many others by bad dreams) takes leave of the king's court and rides home, but comes too late to the wedding feast. His two sisters are the first to meet him, and their conversation is touching, in a ballad which otherwise is one of the fiercest of them all. The one bade him stay; the other bade him ride: “ If thou linger here to-night it will be sorrow for us all.” He was turning to ride away when his mother came and laid hand on his rein, and kept him. At night, in the bride's procession, Ebbe went before her and carried a torch; in the gallery he spoke to her and asked her if she remembered her troth. The bride remembers, but she will not break her new oath, and refuses to follow Ebbe. Then he kills her, and after that his brother, and wounds his father and mother; and therefore is Ebbe Skammelson a wanderer on the earth :

Fordi træder Ebbe Skammelsön saa mangel Sti vild.

¹ *D.g.F.* 354; *Udvalg*, No. 44.

One of the best of all the sorrowful ballads is *Hr. Jon og Fru Bodil*.¹

Young Sir John awakens at midnight, troubled with bad dreams. His wife tries to keep him out of the post of danger in war, but in vain ; he himself will carry his red banner. The parting between them is told simply : all the king's men were riding through the greenwood, and never the fair lady's hand was withdrawn from his saddle-bow till the time came to part ; she took Sir John in her arms and bade him remember that she carried his child under her breast. In the war, where many a brother was slain, Sir John came by his death. His lady awakens from a dream ; she has seen him, his fair hair running with blood, and goes out and meets them bringing home his body. " His foes had made him ill to ken," but she knew him from a scar on his finger that he had made with her scissors as they sat at the betrothal feast. " All Denmark cannot pay her for her loss," is the refrain.

This ballad has not the tragic problem, the conflict of motives, found in those previously summarised. But its simplicity, truth and pathos are nevertheless good proofs of the life and virtue of ballad poetry in Denmark.

The ballads on definite historical events or personages prove the same thing, the active original power of the ballad in shaping stories.² It can hardly be questioned, by anyone who takes the trouble to think about the matter, that there is this strange excellence in the ballads, this power, not merely of repeating old motives, but of turning the substance of daily life into poetry. There is the same gift in this country, in the Border

¹ *D.g.F.* 144.

² Cf. Heusler, *op. cit.*

ballads, but it has been obscured by accidents and prejudices ; whereas in Denmark the accidents of culture and literary tradition have been mostly in favour of the ballads, have saved them from unfair competition, and fostered them with the best life of the nation through many centuries.

XXVII

ICELAND AND THE HUMANITIES

THE Humanities in the ordinary professional sense, the humaner letters of Greece and Rome, have sometimes been rather intolerant of studies further afield, in barbarous Northern or Western regions ; they have taken " Gothic " as a general term of disrespect for things with which they refuse to deal, and so their serene temples are defended from the tumult and misrule of the Northern forests. But it is pleasant to remember that there are exceptions ; even in the heart of the Renaissance a relenting towards the art and poetry of the less favoured nations :

All our understandings are not to be built by the square of Greece and Italy . . . Nor can it but touch of arrogant ignorance to hold this or that nation barbarous, these or those times gross, considering how this manifold creature man, wheresoever he stand in the world, entertains the order of Society, effects that which is most in use, and is eminent in some one thing or other, that fits his humour and the times.¹

If this liberal way of thinking were more generally known and appreciated it might lead to some interesting discoveries, even in places not far from our doors. The Island of Britain has never yet been thoroughly explained to its inhabitants. Few people know any-

¹ S. Daniel, *A Defence of Ryme*, 1607.

thing of the poetical traditions of Wales, of the ancient and elaborate art of verse as it is still practised there, where a postman is quoted as an artist in metre,¹ and a policeman writes the history of literature.² Does not even a casual glimpse into this unfamiliar order of studies add something to one's knowledge, add something to the character of Britain?

Then there are the Highlands of Scotland, with their old language. I speak without knowledge, except of the most accidental kind, but I know there are pleasant surprises waiting for anyone who takes up the study of Gaelic romance and poetry. There is a volume, published last year, on the *Poetry of Badenoch*,³ which has many unfamiliar beautiful things in it: songs that "dally with the innocence of love, like the old age"; laments for the fall of great men—one of those elegies, quite in the fashion of the Middle Ages, composed by a juggler (Punch and Judy showman), on the "Loss of Gaick," the death of Captain Macpherson in the great snowstorm of Christmas, 1799.

We may remember Dr. Douglas Hyde's editions and translations of the poetry of Connaught before we steer for Iceland.

On the voyage we are reminded of the amazing difference of fortune in the progress of the modern world; to pass from Shetland to the Faroe Islands is to go from one group to another, which in their early history were closely related, which are still alike in many features of their daily business, and yet how different in their education, in the contents and habits

¹ Cf. J. Morris Jones, "Welsh Versification," in *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* iv. p. 140 (1903).

² Charles Ashton, Editor of the works of Iolo Goch.

³ Collected and edited by the Rev. Thomas Sinton, Minister of Dores (Inverness, 1906).

of their mind ! Shetland, in spite of its separation from Scotland, is, I suppose, interested in the same things, and has been so for many years past—interested in the Disruption, in the Free Church Declaratory Act, in the House of Lords (various aspects), in Irish Home Rule, and in Tariff Reform. Out to the Northwest all those things are forgotten ; though I am told that Mr. Chamberlain in the Faroes has been turned into the wicked person of a poem on the Boer War—figuring, I suppose, as something like Thrond of Gata in the Faroe legend, a crafty and malignant adversary. It is well in every way to stop at the Faroes on the way to Iceland. The old manners, Dr. Jakobsen tells us, are slowly changing,¹ but they are still alive, and they will always be wonderful to think of. Much has been written about the dances and songs of the Faroes, and more is still to be told, in the book that we are expecting from Mr. Hjalmar Thuren.²

For the present it is enough to remember that these old fashions surviving in the islands are those that once belonged to the whole of Christendom ; they are the carols and ballads of the Middle Ages, not revived as a curiosity, but coming down in unbroken tradition, keeping the forms of eight hundred years ago, and matters that are older still. There, if you have luck, you may hear the tune of the Volsung ballad—how Grani, the horse of Sigurd, bore the Nibelung treasure from the heath ; there you may see faces “ kindle like a fire new-stirred ” at the name of Sigmund Brestisson. There is no end to the wonders of those islands, and it is no mere fanciful conceit to say that you meet with the ghosts of old romances there. Not only the themes

¹ See *Saga-Book*, vol. iv. part i. p. 52.

² Now published (April 1908), *Folkesangen paa Færøerne*.

of Northern tradition ; not only the island story of Thronð and Sigmund, but the heroes of the South—you have only to look at the titles in the Faroese Anthology to find them. One of the first things offered to me by the bookseller in Thorshavn was the ballad of Roncesvalles.

One reason for stopping at the Faroes is that the Icelanders rather look down on the Faroese as comparatively illiterate, and have reasons, if not a complete justification for this loftiness of theirs. The difference between Iceland and the Faroes is nearly as great as the difference between the Faroes and Shetland. Iceland has had an education of its own, and therefore a consciousness and character of its own. Its temper in some things is like that of the old Humanists, who were proud of their knowledge and despised the uninstructed multitude. There is a story of a famous scholarly Dean of Christ Church, who, in a sermon explaining the advantages of Greek, gave this among other arguments, that a knowledge of Greek enabled you to look down on your fellow-creatures. The Icelanders had this sort of spirit from the first, and mainly through pride in their own language. The glory of the Icelandic Commonwealth in old days, the present distinction of Iceland as against the ruder life of the Faroes, is largely due to grammar. This is what makes Iceland so interesting to a student of the Humanities. He recognises there an instinct for language like that which he finds in Greece.

There is a self-conscious principle of style and good grammar in Iceland by which the people are kept together as articulate speaking men, through all the difficulties of their climate and their history—through famine, plagues, earthquakes, and oppression, still

these people, holding up their heads, are able to look down on a large number of their fellow-creatures. It is this self-conscious pride in good language that has kept the old Norse tongue in Iceland from degenerating into boorish dialects ; their language is indomitable. No doubt there are signs of age and weathering in the things that are beyond control, the phonetic changes ; but in the things that are present to the linguistic consciousness, in the grammar and idiom, Iceland has held its own. It is a mistake, as Gudbrand Vigfusson pointed out, to regard the modern Icelanders, or even those of the fifteenth century, as living in the old world of the heroic poetry of the sagas :

It has long been taken for granted that Iceland is and has been a land of antiquaries, a place where the old traditions, nay more, the old poems and myths of the Teutons have lingered on unbroken ; and glowing phrases have painted its people as a Don Quixote of nations, ever dreaming over the glorious reminiscences of the gods and heroes. It is to the credit of the Icelanders as a living people that it is not so.

But it is also true that their lives and thought are still governed by the intellectual virtues of their ancestors, the poets, scholars and historians of the early days. How otherwise could they have kept their old language, so that *Njála* is no more difficult to the children there than the *Pilgrim's Progress* is to the children here ? What else is it that distinguishes them from the simpler people of the Faroes, or Norway, or Jutland ?

It is plain on the face of European history, though like many obvious things it is often forgotten, that the spirit of the Northern nations (commonly called Scandinavian) was needed to quicken all the rest. We know what was done in England by the Normans, and it is a

commonplace that Russia (*Garðaríki*) was made by the Varangians. Iceland was a political experiment of another sort, and the meaning of it was to show what the Northern genius could do on bare unbroken ground, picked out and colonised by a few adventurous families from Norway. Elsewhere Norwegians might become Norman, might work as leaven in the lump, in France, Italy, and England. Here, in Iceland, they were to show what they could do when left to themselves.

The Icelandic settlement was (and remains in history) a protest against all the ordinary successful commonplaces of the world. The settlers cut themselves off from the progress of Norway, which was on the way to shape itself into political strength under a new monarchy. They made a commonwealth of their own, which was in contradiction to all the prejudices of the Middle Ages and of all ancient and modern political philosophy ; a commonwealth which was not a state, which had no government, no sovereignty. And this republic, or association, without political coherence, likely, one might have thought, to fall into mere disintegration from its want of proper equipment in the struggle for existence, was held together, and survived by force of intellect ; and proved itself superior to Norway, took the lead of Norway, in certain important matters belonging to Norway itself. You see what I am coming to ; the Icelanders wrote and interpreted the history of the Norwegian kings, of the country from which they had severed themselves. They also provided that country, and its kings, with a supply of poets. From the remote island there came back to Norway its consciousness of itself in historical writings, and its poetical spirit in the staves of the Icelandic artists. In the whole record of humanity there are few

things stranger, and since the time of the Giant who had no heart in his body, few things more confounding to ordinary theories of physiology. It is somewhat as if the Pilgrim Fathers had undertaken the literary work of England, as if Milton, Dryden, and Swift had come from Massachusetts, while the mother-country produced the genius of Cotton Mather and Michael Wigglesworth. (This comparison is a little hard on Norway, and must not be looked at too closely.)

In Iceland the Humanities flourish most notably in the historical form. History is one of the arts ; we call Herodotus and the Muses to witness ; it might also be possible to *subpæna* a Regius Professor or two, who write elegantly, as men of letters, to prove that history is not literature. It is worth while to consider a little the work of the Icelandic historians.

To begin with, as one might imagine, they were disqualified for dealing with any large matter, like the history of a kingdom. Their own origin and their way of life was a protest against kingdoms, even against all politics as usually understood. There are none of the large masses, the generalities, the statistics, with which the politician deals ; the remarkable thing in the sagas, the real secret of the Icelandic mind, is that nothing is really valuable except the individual character. It is the dramatic point of view. Shakespeare has been criticised sometimes on account of the selfishness of his *dramatis personæ*—so many of them having nothing to think about except their own private futures. The criticism will apply to the Icelandic sagas. Public motives, great interests and causes, are not unknown there, but the motives are chiefly of a personal sort ; the men and women are not representatives of abstract ideas ; what they represent is mainly themselves :

Every man in his Humour. Their stage management makes little provision for the crowd—much less than Shakespeare's. Hence the strength of their action and dialogue; hence the inexhaustible beauty of their story-telling. It is founded on a sense of reality, an imaginative knowledge of character; on whatever it is that makes a difference between the true dramatist and the preacher.

The point of view in the Icelandic sagas might be described as being the diametrical opposite of philanthropy. It is altogether taken up with particulars. It is desperately limited. There is no use in talking to the Icelander about the human race at large when he is thinking of Grettir at Drangey. He will not take anything in exchange for Grettir, and you will not put Drangey out of his head by talking to him of any larger islands. The moralist or the economist may be perplexed by this excessive devotion to a particular person or scene; they are thrown out by the Icelandic historian, as Ajax was by the infatuation of Achilles when Briseis was taken away. "I can get you half a dozen as good," said Ajax—but his values were wrong, or Achilles thought them so, which came to the same thing.

This intense limitation of interest, this dramatic view, makes Iceland in the sagas (down to the end of *Sturlunga* and even further) utterly different from all the rest of the world. It is not that Iceland is the only place where such things are found—luckily there are sagas of one sort or another in every language under the sun, from Genesis to the memoirs of Sir Evelyn Wood. But in Iceland there is next to nothing left when you have taken away the personal drama, and no other country can show such a multiplicity of stories where the characters all stand out clear.

Now this kind of clearness, it might be thought, would hardly do for one of the larger fields of history, where life is more complex, and where principles and problems appear which have no place in the unpolitical condition of Iceland. For all that the Icelanders turned their historical minds to Norway, never turned their minds away from Norway for any great length of time ; and the result is the second great achievement of their narrative art, the *Lives of the Kings*, the work of Ari, Snorri and Sturla, to name only the chief among a great number of historians, a companion series to the family histories of Iceland, rendering in the same way the life of the kingdom, which to those rebel colonists was still always the mother-country.

It is strange how the Icelanders never seem thoroughly at home in their colonial island ; Norway, and not Iceland, is always the focus. Iceland is outside ; to go to Iceland is to " sail out " ; while they " sail home " (*fara útan*) to Norway. They keep the old popular Norwegian names for the points of the compass, placing N.E. and S.E. *inland* (" land-north " and " land-south "), an arrangement which works well enough for the greater part of Norway, but of course is a geographical fiction in Iceland.¹

The Norwegian histories are among the great things made by the Icelanders, and only short of the greatest. They have everything that is to be found in the best of the sagas, except possibly one thing. That, it is true, is one of the chief qualities in *Njála*, *Laxdæla*, and the rest, namely, the tragic tension that gives unity to the jarring elements of fact and popular tradition in those noble stories. The Norwegian chronicles have a lower vitality, and their material is more cumbersome ; the

¹ Cf. *Saga-Book*, vol. iv. part i. p. 235 ; part ii. pp. 426-7.

tragedies of Olaf Tryggvason and Olaf the Saint are not as clear and strong as those of Njal, or of Kjartan Olafsson. But the mode of imagination is still the same ; and considering the difficulties of the ground, it is even more wonderful how the historian manages to keep hold of the frequently intricate plots ; how he weaves in the conversations dramatically, using them not simply as ornament, but as an essential part of his fabric. The dialogue in those lives is not mere quotation from memoirs, brought in to keep the reader awake when he is dropping off under the influence of serious political argument. It is all part of the life that is described, and of the historian's mind in writing. I do not mean, of course, that everything in the Book of Kings is closely wrought and careful ; fortunately there are many careless episodes that never were anything more, or wanted to be anything more, than digressions. But some things are otherwise, and I will single out especially one part of the story of St. Olaf that stands by itself—the fortunes of Asbjörn Selsbani. It has all the best qualities of the Icelandic saga ; the sense for character and for plot, the humorous dialogue, the tragic situation, in which St. Olaf himself is involved. Abstracts of stories are dull things, but you will let me pass over the beginning of this one shortly ; if it is painful now, it may perhaps be of some value later, merely by calling attention to one of the fine passages of the history, which may be studied comfortably afterwards at leisure.

The story is this : Asbjörn belonged to the great northern house of Bjarkey ; his father lived and kept great state at Throndeness in the island of Hindö, the aspect of which is well known to many summer travellers on the way to the North Cape. When his father

died, Asbjörn had no means to keep up the establishment in its old splendour and hospitality ; but he did his best. Stores ran short, so he took a ship and went south for corn and malt, and came after a time to Augvaldsness, another place often seen and little noticed from the deck of the steamer as it passes through the Karmsund between Bergen and Stavanger. At Augvaldsness lived the king's steward, Sel-Thorir, a churlish person. From him the young man learned that there was an embargo on corn ; the king had forbidden all shipments of corn to the Northland. Asbjörn sailed on further till he came to Erling Skjalgsson, at his house at Sole in Jæderen. Erling, his mother's brother, was one of the greatest men in Norway, commonly called the King of Rogaland ; and Erling, though with some difficulty, got him the corn and malt that he required.

On the way back he called at Augvaldsness again ; there the king's steward not only had all the freight cleared out of Asbjörn's ship, but took away Asbjörn's sails and gave him an old set, " good enough for you, now you are sailing light."

Early the next year (1023) Asbjörn came south to Augvaldsness again. He landed on the outside (west) of the island of Kormt, where there are few houses, and walked across to Augvaldsness, where at this time King Olaf himself was visiting his steward. Asbjörn listened as the king sat at meat, and heard people questioning Sel-Thorir as to what had passed between him and Asbjörn, and how Asbjörn had borne himself. The steward said that when the ship was being unloaded Asbjörn kept his countenance in a sort of way, " but when we took the sails from him he wept." When Asbjörn heard this he drew his sword, and ran

in and cut off Sel-Thorir's head, so that it fell on the table before the king, and the body across his feet.

So the story goes on, with the mixture and conflict of motives, right and wrong, law and freedom, such as is well understood in many literatures, but nowhere with more impartiality than in the Icelandic. The fall of St. Olaf, seven years later, is largely traceable to this adventure of the high-spirited young gentleman from the Northern island.

I shall take another example from a later history, Sturla's life of Hacon, to show how the Icelandic manner comes out in treating a Norwegian theme. I have a particular reason for choosing this, because I once spoke rather disparagingly of *Hákonar Saga*, and now I am sorry. This that follows, the scene between King Hacon and Queen Margaret, might have saved me from rash judgment.

It is part of the story of the rivalry between Hacon and his father-in-law, Skule the Duke. The news came to Hacon that Skule was up against him ; there were few men with the King when he heard of it, and he was silent for a while. Then he said :

" God be praised that now I know what to be at from this time henceforth, for it has been a long time coming what now is brought to a head." Then he went to the Queen's room, and she rose from her bed and put on a red mantle over her gown, and placed a cushion for the King to sit on ; but he would not sit down, though he answered her greeting cheerfully. She asked if any news had come for the King.

" Nothing much," he said ; " only there are two kings in Norway now." Then said the Queen : " But one of them must be the true king, and he is where you are ; so may God grant it to be, and the blessed King

Olaf the Saint." Then Hacon told her that her father, Duke Skule, had allowed himself to be hailed as King at the Parliament of Thronðheim.

"Nay, but it cannot be," said the Queen, "and O, for God's sake, believe it not, so long as you can forbear"—and with that the sobbing came and choked her, so that she could not speak a word more. The King comforted her, and said that she should never suffer change on his part by reason of her father's treachery. Then he went out, and sped the arrow of war north and south from Bergen.

It is a high order of intelligence that sees life as it is seen by these historians. The question will not be asked here, "What is the use of it all?" It may be difficult to explain in what consists the value of Icelandic literature to the great world, which gets on so easily without it. But there is the same sort of difficulty with regard to Greece, and you cannot argue with Mr. Cobden or any other successful man when he prefers *The Times* to "all the works of Thucydides." You cannot justify the study of the Humanities by any argument except those drawn from the Humanities themselves; the use of them is that they teach a different sort of judgment, a different standard of values, from the judgment and the standard of the ordinary worldly success. It is the glory of Iceland to the present day that it has kept its ancient heritage of literature, and it has its reward, in being itself. There are about 100,000 Icelanders in the world; counting the 20,000 in Winnipeg and other parts of Canada, who have made Icelandic one of the languages of the British empire. There are many towns about the world that could easily take in the whole population of Iceland; there can be few that produce so many men of ability,

and so high an average of intellectual power. It is a subject that might be recommended to students of heredity and professors of Eugenics. One thing at least is certain, it is the Icelandic fashion of thought, a thousand years old at the present day, which makes the difference between the people of Iceland and the inarticulate multitudes of Nineveh, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left.

Our last meeting¹ was saddened by anxiety for the life of the great Norwegian scholar, Sophus Bugge, whose son was to have addressed us that evening. Our hopes, sincerely and warmly expressed at the time, were not fulfilled, and now we have to pay another tribute to the man who has done so much for Northern studies of every kind, and much for other branches of learning, both by his definite writings, and by his example of scholarly perseverance.

A month after Sophus Bugge, another of the older generation, Benedikt Gröndal, passed away. Like his father, Sveinbjörn Egilsson, he lived for the Humanities—only that in his case the meaning of the term must be liberally extended, so as to include the study of the birds that he loved. Few things in the history of learning are finer than the devotion of the father and son to their books and their gentle recreations. Sveinbjörn Egilsson's work at the Latin School—a little University—of Bessastaðir, has been praised by many of his pupils; I remember particularly how Gudbrand Vigfusson acknowledged his debt to him, and particularly for his teaching of Homer. What

¹ This address was given to the Viking Club and printed in the Club's Saga-Book in April, 1908.

Sveinbjörn began in his translations, prose and verse, of the *Odyssey*, Benedikt Gröndal continued. In the little book published last year¹ in honour of his eightieth birthday, it was made plain that his learning was sometimes too various for the more exact and painful methods of modern philology. In temper and taste he belonged to a much older generation, and to the family of Pantagruel. He was a humorist in all senses of the word ; glorious, exorbitant, in his ambitions and fancies, and at the same time a close and laborious student of the things that pleased him. There are many subjects and very quaint forms of expression in the catalogue of his works ; it includes his translation of the *Iliad*, his *Clavis Poetica* (a key to that poetical dictionary which was his father's great achievement), poems of all sorts, comic romance. I remember with pleasure how the first of many gifts I received from him was his list of the birds of Iceland.

This address is called "inaugural," and ought not to have anything in it to spoil the augury, such as it may be. But we know that in the North it has never been thought ill-omened, even at the feast, to remember the valiant men that are dead, and those two, Sophus Bugge and Benedikt Gröndal, each in his own way, were heroes.

¹ *Benedikt Gröndal áttíður*, 1826-1906 ; containing essays by Jón Jónsson, Guðmundur Finnbogason, Finnur Jónsson, Helgi Jónsson, Þorsteinn Erlingsson, and a poem by Sigurður Kristjánsson.

XXVIII

THE EARLY HISTORIANS OF NORWAY

THE earliest intelligence of Norway comes to the rest of the world from skippers' stories of what they have seen in their voyages ; the first record is perhaps to be found in the *Odyssey*. The country of the Laestrygonians, where the paths of day and night are near one another, and a sleepless man might earn a double wage, is not mere romance, but knowledge brought to the Mediterranean from the North by the old ways of trade. The people of Laestrygonia are monstrous ogres. It is true that the king's daughter is courteous enough, "ma la madre è il diavolo" ; the queen was like the rock-top of a mountain, and the companions of Ulysses loathed the sight of her. Travellers on the west coast of Norway will have no difficulty in finding for themselves the cliff-locked harbour, where all but one ship of Ulysses was wrecked, and the men spitted by the Northern Trolls.

There is some interval before the next witness, and he too is an explorer : Ohthere, Óttarr, King Alfred's ship-captain, the first man to sail round the North Cape into the White Sea. Ohthere's narrative is the first to use in writing the name of the country, "Norðweg," and with Ohthere the historical record of Norway definitely begins. It has been often read and

paraphrased and quoted, but it cannot be spoilt ; there is nothing corruptible in its clearness and plain sense. The sailors in a Norwegian steamer going North will talk very like Ohthere if you ask them about " Finns " (*i.e.* Lapps) and " Quains."

Ohthere's narrative has nothing in it of what is commonly reckoned political history, but it is a document for one of the most important general facts in the progress of his country, namely, its colonising power. This was one of York Powell's favourite topics ; how the navigating and colonising skill of the Northmen was learned first of all in coasting voyages. They had to discover and settle their own country, before they tried experiments in England and Iceland, France and Apulia. The borders of Norway in Ohthere's day were far to the south of the present limit, which is the North Cape itself. The modern civil society of Tromsö and Hammerfest had not begun to occupy the wilderness ; Ohthere's home,¹ " northernmost of all Northmen," is somewhere about Malangen c. 69° 50' ; it is six days' sail for him before he rounds the Cape.

In King Alfred's notice of Ohthere there is nothing of internal Norwegian politics, nothing of the debate between the new monarchy and the old country families which led, among other things, to the settlement of Iceland, in King Alfred's own lifetime. The king may not have known about these things ; certainly his North Atlantic geography is defective. But he knew well enough the piratical and warlike habits of the Northmen ; yet of these there is hardly a trace in this context ; the Norway that he describes is a country of peaceful business, apart from unimportant bickerings

¹ Storm, *Om opdagelsen af Nordkap, og veien til det hvide Hav*, 1894, *Det norske geografiske Selskab, Aarb. V.*

with the Finnish neighbours. It is the country which one knows from its own historians; the complement of Ohthere is the story of his contemporary, Thorolf Kveldulfsson, Skallagrim's brother, and his management of the Finnish trade.¹ King Alfred had pierced the barrier of fear and prejudice which hid the truth of Norway from the people whom the Northmen plundered. He knew that the Norwegians were not savages, and that their life at home was much like that of other people, taken up with the ordinary means of livelihood: pasture, tillage, hunting, fishing, and trade. King Alfred, we may say, had discovered the average reasonable healthy country life of Norway, which is not very different now from that what it was in the beginning. He ignores the political genius of Norway; and he gives no place, in this part of his work, to the fury of the Norwegian rover. Ohthere is an adventurer, but with no high-flown ambitions, no rhetoric or display. Hakluyt includes him along with Sir Hugh Willoughby, Chancellor, and Burrows, in the discovery of Muscovy, and there is no difficulty or incongruity in turning from the earlier explorer to the later. But this aspect of Ohthere is not the only one; he is not merely the forerunner of the Elizabethan Englishman. He is a witness for his own country, as has been said; and though he gives no single name of any Norwegian except his own, and says nothing about the problems of government or the pillars of society, his evidence cannot be left out of the history of Norway.

Adam of Bremen, a century and a half later, has much more to tell, and is not a little interested in the characters and fates of the Northern kings. But he does not (though he has good opportunities) get into

¹ *Egil's Saga*, cx., cxiv., *passim*.

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the heart of Norway as King Alfred did through the clear eyes and wits of his Norwegian retainer. The aspect of Norway, given by Adam, is determined by Adam's own ground. The provinces of Hamburg and Bremen are bases for the Church Militant against Scandinavian and Slavonic heathendom ;¹ Norway is marked out for the work of travelling preachers, and it takes a long time to bring it under.

Adam of Bremen knows Norway more fully, more widely, than King Alfred, more in relation with the politics of the world. But the knowledge, in comparison, is school-knowledge, or produces that impression—as of a subject reducible to words and formulas, not present to the mind as experience. But after all, the same might be said of much more ambitious and elaborate histories.

There is one great exception ; Adam, like King Alfred, has his authority in a living voice, and Adam's story-teller, to whom he listened, was a much more important adventurer than Ohthere, the sea-captain. King Svein Estrithson was the son of Canute's sister, and of that Earl Ulf whose name is repeated every lawful day in York Minster when they show to visitors the horn that is said to be his. Svein Estrithson, the cousin of Harold Godwinsson, the antagonist of Magnus the Good and Harold Hardrada, and after many adventures King of Denmark at last, was found by Master Adam in his hours of ease, ready to talk, and in this way the Northern part of Adam's history was fed and supported. Adam does not make use of these conversations as some readier historians might ; one feels at every turn the want of the trained or intuitively

¹ In *legatione gentium*, quod primum est Hammaburgensis ecclesiae officium.

skilled reporter. But what is preserved is not contemptible. It is all the more interesting, in a way, because it shows, before the great Icelandic school had properly begun, how the kings' lives were first recorded : namely, by the kings themselves. The kings were fond of spinning yarns and sometimes of listening to them ; we know that from the Icelandic histories. We know how the story of Harald Hardrada's adventures in Micklegarth¹ was carried from his own report to Iceland by Halldor, son of Snorri, the priest, and brought back from Iceland and repeated to King Harald himself. But the written authority for this, though good enough in its way, is only of the thirteenth century ; here is Adam of Bremen, a contemporary witness, with whom King Svein had spoken familiarly. There are many stories of King Svein written later in Icelandic, and there is a good chance that some of them have come down from the king himself. Adam must surely have heard the original version of Svein's escape from the naval battle of Nissaa (*Nizar orrosta*, 1062), a story that comes in different forms in the earlier historians, and is preserved by Snorri in the best form of all, if you take it merely as adventure ; it may very well be also the version nearest the truth. It is a pity Adam did not write it down ; it is not that he has any objection to stories. For him, as for the Icelanders, history is mainly conversation and entertainment, and before the Icelanders had begun, Adam begins the writing of Northern sagas.

Through his Latin, and in spite of his foreign German point of view, one comes fairly close to the same sort of world as is given by the Icelandic historians. Adam

¹ *Utferðarsaga* ; cf. *Morkinskinna*, p. 72, and the Oxford Icelandic Prose Reader.

is patronising and tolerant ; his friends in the North are still barbarians, and he regards them much as a fair-minded English observer looks on the Irish, with condescending goodwill. But Adam's record may be transposed into the terms of the sagas ; King Svein is the same sort of adventurer as is shown in the Northern kings' lives. To turn Adam's stories into the Northern form, there is no need to amplify ; you have only to combine your information. Thus you know pretty well how the following incident might appear in a saga :

" At that time, Svein in a voyage to England, was driven by a storm to put in at Hadelo. There in the ordinary Viking way (*more pyratico*) he plundered the neighbourhood ; and there he was taken by some of the archbishop's men and brought into his presence. But the archbishop received his captive with honour, and took him to Bremen and made agreement with him ; and then, after a few days, gave him leave to depart, with royal gifts. This the king himself told us, highly praising the archbishop as for goodliness of person and liberality of mind admired by all men. He told his hearers also of the pontiff's kingly household and the immense treasure of the Church which he had seen at Bremen, and many things besides."

Svein spoke also to Adam of his twelve years' service with King James of Sweden, up and down through the country, carrying on the ordinary business of government, the correction of anarchy and enforcement of the king's peace. But the particulars are not given. Much of his story must have been very like Ohthere's ; thus like Ohthere, he tells of the troublesome people, of small stature, but strong and quick, who come down at intervals and waste the land and are beaten off and

go back to the fells. He tells also of Wineland, with its grapes and its self-sown wheat—the first written notice of America—just like the story of Eric the Red. He gave good advice, too, and helped the church of Hamburg in its missions. He dissuaded Archbishop Adalbert from going himself on a mission journey to Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Orkneys, and Iceland; and showed that it would be much more satisfactory to employ missionaries who knew the language and manners of the people; obviously good sense. It is most remarkable that Svein is quoted for facts of Danish and Swedish history long before his own time: “he had them all in his mind like a written book,” says Adam. The barbarian adventurer at home is a Christian gentleman with a taste for pedigrees. His gift of remembering had greatly impressed Adam of Bremen. The king is shown, in one place, listening attentively to the teaching of Archbishop Adalbert; “he noted clearly and stored in memory the passages from Scripture,” especially with regard to the deadly sins which were not his own.

Are Thorgilsson was born “the winter after the fall of King Harold Sigurdsson,” the winter after Stamford Bridge and Hastings. He is the first historian of Norway in the Northern tongue: so that with respect to him and his successors Adam of Bremen has a great advantage of time, and his personal acquaintance with Svein Ulfsson makes him invaluable and irreplaceable as a witness.

Now we come to the Icelanders and their historical work.

There is sometimes perhaps a danger, not so much of exaggerating the merits of Icelandic history, as of unjustly depreciating other nations. Sagas are found

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everywhere, in all languages. Barbour's *Bruce* is one ; the Chronicles of Froissart are made in the same way as the Icelandic histories, out of conversations and recollections. In spite of all the differences of circumstances, the French memoirs of the seventeenth century can be partly rendered in Icelandic terms. There is the young man making his fortune in the household of a great lord (the Abbé de Cosnac, Gourville), there are the different kinds of great men watching the king for purposes of their own, some rebellious and some compliant, there is the king and the king's will. The Norwegian Lives give the same sort of impression as the French memoirs, of the dangerous tigerish element in kings ; the relentless pursuit, the talent for revenge. But apart from the matter, the interests of the narrators are essentially the same ; an interest in persons and events, with the great political motives more often implied than explained or discussed.

What distinguishes the Icelandic stories from those of other nations is the quicker sense for drama and the personal elements ; also the unencumbered language, and the fact that they were written so early in a style which no later author has equalled on similar ground.

The sagas of Iceland and Norway are partly memoirs and personal talk ; something different from regular history, though not beyond the jurisdiction of history ; family tradition and pedigrees and so forth. What is wanted to make them into history is political sense. That is often not conspicuous, in the stories for example of the humours of various Icelandic poets in Norway ; while the secret of Iceland might be said to be its escape from the great politics of the world, its concentration on domestic and private life as the most important, preferring Ithaca to all the temptations of the

larger world and its vanities. But this is not all, and the historical prose of Iceland is not free from ideas, though it gets on happily enough for the most part with the ordinary practical world of seeing and hearing, "immersed in matter." The life of Iceland began in a political revolution; the new monarchy of Harald Fairhair spoilt the old customary life of Norway, and provoked the resistance of the great houses who could not stand his interfering government. The settlement of Iceland, to escape from the tyranny of Harald, was an attempt to carry on the old life of Norway in a new colony, and it was partly successful. The difference was that the new settlers found themselves in their own despite possessed of a new sort of intellect. They wanted to keep up the old habitual instinctive way of living; they found that in the attempt to do so they had become reflective, self-conscious, and awake; they knew what a king was, and what was implied in a policy of national unification. In order to re-establish old Norwegian custom in their new-found land they had to think, to deliberate, to invent a constitution and borrow a code of laws.

The historical work of the Icelanders has some of the qualities of this intellectual change. The settlers of Iceland were forced by their new move to think for themselves; they could not live merely after the use and wont which had carried their ancestors from stone to bronze and bronze to iron. Use and wont was what they desired, but they would only get it by a conscious effort. They were in for rationalism before they knew what they were about.

Hence the paradox, that the first Icelandic historian, Are the Wise, is a critic with a dry light, one of the moderns, crystal-clear in historical perception, an

author not remembered by those popular writers who lament and pity "the night of the Middle Ages." It is strange enough that the Icelandic beginnings should have been of this sort ; that (as York Powell was fond of putting it) Thucydides should come before Herodotus ; and the Icelandic truth is even stranger than this figure of speech, for Are, the mature historical critic, was the first author in the language. But the paradox is explained (not made less wonderful) by the conditions of Icelandic life. They were a proud people, they had come through a strain which had awakened and stirred their minds : they had to foster their memory if they were to preserve their reason. Without their pedigrees and family histories, without their continued interest in the kings of Norway, they would have sunk into boors. An effort of conscious will was needed at the outset to save their souls, to keep alive their honour. Are, many generations after the first settlement, but still in a sense at the beginning of Icelandic literature, makes a record of this early movement, and writes down what had been retained in memory from the first days of the commonwealth under the influence of those motives of pride.

After Are had made the framework of Icelandic and Norwegian history, it was possible for other writers to use another style, the style of the sagas as we know them ; the style of Snorri Sturluson, in the rich, dramatic narrative that has taken up the oral reports of so many story-tellers. The lives of the kings, much more interesting, as stories, than Are's exact and scientific work, in reality belong to an order which is earlier than Are, though they are re-fashioned by a later author (by more than one) and set in place with the help of Are's chronological foundations. Story-

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telling for amusement is the source of the kings' lives, and that sort of thing is found, of course, long before there is anything like Are the Wise. But it was Are the Wise, by his drier method, who made it possible for self-respecting authors to write down the traditional stories. If Are had not attended to the dates, and the important historical facts, the Icelandic school of history would never have been formed, the heroic narrative of Iceland would never have risen above oral tradition ; would have disappeared like the sagas of Sweden, or of Norway and Iceland itself, for the most part after the thirteenth century.

The book of Snorri Sturluson, commonly called *Heimskringla*, is like Froissart's re-writing of Jehan le Bel ; Snorri and Froissart both get credit for much that is not their own. The case of Snorri is more complicated than that of Froissart, for there are several previous authors of the same matter ; the Book of Kings is a traditional book, a prose epic, or a series of epics, as some scholars have imagined them, shaped out of old materials. Fortunately, much of the earlier work has been preserved ; fortunately, not merely for scientific and professional purposes, for the use of academies and learned societies, but because they are good to read for their own sake—not all in the same degree.¶

There are two short Latin histories, *Theodrici Monachi Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagensium* and the *Historia Norwegiae*.¹ These two books might be picked out of the Middle Ages on purpose to make a contrast of their style with the Icelandic saga. Theodric (whose real name may have been Thoror) indulges in all the favourite medieval irrelevances,

¹ Both, most conveniently, in G. Storm, *Monumenta historica Norvegiæ Latine conscripta*, Christiania, 1880.

drags in the Roman Emperors and the Platonic year, digresses from Charybdis to the Huns, and embroiders his text with quotations from the Latin poets. The anonymous author of the other book has the same sort of taste, with more florid rhetoric, *nostri ingenioli igniculus*, and *exinde ad eum ipse praedonum princeps properavit* (this is Olaf Tryggvason), and (of the death of Earl Hacon) *quem servus suus nomine Carcus nequiter noctu necavit*. It is impossible here to give any summary of these books, much less to discuss the problems which they offer. But it is worth mentioning that the anonymous history gives, like Adam of Bremen, what is left out in *Heimskringla*, the sorrowful death of Olaf Tryggvason's queen, *ast conjux intemperanter viri mortem ferens dolore deperiit*. Was it strict historical judgment, or mere dullness, that left this out, along with the death of King Olaf's hound, in the revised version of the Book of Kings?

Theodric's book is dedicated to Archbishop Eystein (1161-1188); he may have been a monk of Holm, the little island of Trondhjem, in the abbey which Matthew Paris afterwards visited and reformed. He is a Norwegian author,¹ and that is of some importance; as is also the fact that he relies on the Icelanders for his matter, in great part, and notes that their history is based on old poems.²

¹ Against this conjecture it is urged that Theodric, in a book dedicated to the Archbishop of Nidaros, would not have spoken of Monks Holm as if it needed description: *parvissima quaedam insula quae adjacet metropoli Nidrosiensi*. But Theodric is writing for people who do not know as much as he does, and it is not uncommon for historians to dissemble their personal feelings when they come upon familiar or domestic associations in the course of their story.

² Prout sagaciter perquirere potuimus ab eis penes horum memoria praecipue vigere creditur quos nos Islendinga vocamus, qui haec in suis antiquis carminibus percelebrata recolunt.

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The author of the second Latin history is unknown, even his nation is uncertain. He dedicates his book to "Agnellus," who is supposed by Storm to be Thomas Agnellus, *archidiaconus Wellensis*, the author, about 1183, of a tract on the death of the young King Henry.¹ Dr. Finnur Jónsson thinks it probable that the *Historia Norwegiae* was written by a foreigner settled in Norway, and gives good arguments to support this. In its natural history it has some likeness to Olaus Magnus much later, and one note of its own well worth recording; how the white mountains of Iceland appear to sailors far out at sea and give them their landfall.² *Inter quos mons casulae ad instar Aetnae*. It is like Eggert Olafsson's sight of Hecla from the sea (C.P.B. ii. p. 411). One most remarkable thing in the *Historia Norwegiae* is its coincidence with Are in the chapter on the early mythical kings. The book ends with St. Olaf's return from England. There are many puzzling things in it. What, for example, is the book Philostratus quoted at the beginning (a maimed beginning) of the Prologue? ³

Closely, though rather obscurely related to these two Latin works, is the short vernacular history, commonly called *ágrip*, i.e. *compendium*.⁴ The author quotes some

¹ *Libellus de morte et sepultura Henrici regis Angliae junioris*, printed in Stevenson's edition of Ralph of Coggeshall, R.S. 1875.

² *Habet namque eadem insula innumerabiles montes verum continua glacie contactos, unde illis resplendentibus nautae longe a terra in sale positi portum sibi opportunum per hos denotare solent.* *Hist. Norw.*, p. 93.

³ . . . tus in Philostrato suo laudans amicitiam, cum de ceteris vitae bonis ageret, inter veros amicos nihil fere difficile fore meminit. Hujus igitur tanti philosophi satis probabili sententiae nequaquam contraire ausus, etc.

⁴ *Stutt ágrip af Noregs Konunga sögum. Fornmannna Sögur X.*, p. 377 sqq., also in a diplomatic edition by Dahlerup (*Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur*), 1880.

verses in evidence of his facts, more particularly from Sigvat, in the same manner as the Icelanders. But the book is Norwegian in its point of view, much more exclusively than the two Latin histories. At first sight it is unattractive in its bad spelling and its obvious want of proportion. But it is full of interest, nevertheless, and it tallies with a good deal of *Heimskringla*, whether as itself the direct source or as borrowing from the same original. Here again one meets with another proof that the style of the Icelandic historians, so apparently sincere and pure, is not due to any ignorant or innocent seclusion from the temptations of rhetoric. This work, which belongs to the twelfth century, is more rhetorical than Snorri in the thirteenth; not excessively, yet with distinct touches of Euphuistic alliteration and balance, sometimes with good effect.¹

Further, there is the old legendary life of St. Olaf, in fragments,² and the latter version of the same, better preserved.³ There are the acts of Olaf King and Saint in Latin,⁴ and in the Old Norwegian homilies. There is the life of Olaf Tryggvason by Odd Snorrason, monk of Thingeyre, written in Latin, though extant only in the vernacular translations.⁵ The life of Olaf by Gunnlaug Leifsson, a monk of the same house, is known only through references in the long saga of Olaf Tryggvason.

¹ e.g. in the passing of Olaf Tryggvason: *en hvacki er lifi hans heifere luct, þa er þat lichilict at guþ hafi solina.*

² G. Storm: *Otte brudstykker af den oeldste saga om Olav den hellige*, Christiania, 1893. Cf. Storm, *Snorre Sturlassons Historiekrivning*, Kjöbenhavn, 1873, p. 37 sq., 233 sq.

³ Commonly cited as O. H. L., ed. Keyser and Unger, Christiania, 1849.

⁴ Ed. Storm, *Monumenta*.

⁵ *Fornmanna Sögur XI.*; also by Maunch, Christiania, 1853.

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Besides, there are other works, which come rather more nearly into competition with Snorri, if it would not be truer to say that Snorri has "lurched them off the garland," by taking from them what he wanted and leaving them without their due praise.

Eirik Oddson (c. 1150) is thought by some to be the first author in the characteristic Icelandic style. His book "about Harald Gille and two of his sons, about Magnus the Blind, and Sigurd Slembe to their death," is lost as a separate whole, but a large part of it is preserved in the MS. *Morkinskinna*, namely, the life of Sigurd Slembe. Sigurd Slembe, one of many pretenders in Norwegian history, has some resemblance to Perkin Warbeck, at any rate for the gallant way he played his part, and like Perkin Warbeck he has been fortunate in the authors who have treated his story. Long before Björnson's play, an older poet, Ivar Ingimund's son, wrote the elegy of Sigurd Slembe, remarkable among its fellows as being composed for a defeated adventurer after his fall. And Eirik Oddson wrote his life in prose. It is the sort of work one wants; the intelligent use of reminiscences that were going about in the author's day—memoirs written with sense and spirit. Eirik refuses to write down everything; he has heard many speeches reported as having been spoken by Sigurd at his death; but the best witness, Hall Thorgeirsson, said that he made little answer to his enemies, though many taunted him; therefore Eirik will not set down more. He is one of those who attend to the sentiments of actors and onlookers, not for the sake of pathos or any unfair effect, but because of the life of the story. In the account of the battle at sea off the Gray Holm, Sunday, 12th November, 1139 (i *Hvölumövi holminn grá*) there are instances of different sorts.

When Hreidar Griotgardsson dies, it is said "all men held that he had well valiantly followed his liege lord, and good it is for him that gains such a report." This is an heroic commonplace, the right morality of the loyal servitor, such as is found in the English poem of Maldon and in many a ballad and chronicle besides. This is repeated in *Heimskringla*. But Snorri does not give the pathetic last saying of Magnus the Blind when he got his death wound: "This should have come seven years ago." He gives, however, the report of Ivar Skratthanki, one of the followers of Magnus, afterwards Bishop of Trondhjem, who saw one of his companions a prisoner after the battle, going to be beheaded. "Then said Ivar, that it came over him more than he had ever felt in his life, when his name-sake was taken ashore to the heading-place, and turned to them and said: Good luck at our next meeting! Dame Gyrith, Birgis' daughter, sister of Archbishop John,¹ said that she heard this from Bishop Ivar."

Eirik Oddson's work is embedded in the collection called *Morkinskinna*,² dated by Storm between 1217 and 1222. This, unhappily, has large gaps in it; but these are partly made good by other texts, especially by Hulda-Hrokkinskinna³ and by the Flatey-Book. *Fagrskinna* (before 1231, Storm) is another version of the Book of Kings; the two are complements of one another in a very interesting way. The author of *Morkinskinna* has no scruples about the unities of narrative, and puts in all the interesting anecdotes and adventures he can find; *Morkinskinna* is the source of a large number of the episodes, especially the stories

¹ The first Archbishop of Trondhjem, consecrated 1152, at the instance of Cardinal Nicolas Brakespere.

² Ed. Unger, 1867.

³ Storm, p. 70, F, s. vi.

about Icelanders, that give variety to the Norwegian history. The author of *Fagrskinna*, on the other hand, has a classical mind and a regard for the dignity of history; in fact he has the same sort of design as Snorri; he wished to keep attention fixed on the chief personages and the main issues. This does not mean that he depletes his books and takes the life out of it; he is liberal enough when the right persons (as he thinks) are concerned. But he will not allow the irrelevant stories a place in his work. He makes up for the want of these by his liking for poetry and his large quotations.

The two books, side by side, belong to two separate schools; both are excellent, and the place of neither is taken by *Heimskringla*.

There is a life of Earl Hacon Ivarsson, the only independent saga of a Norwegian lord, which is used by Snorri in his life of Harald Hadrada, and is partly extant as a separate thing.¹ The matter of it has some importance. Snorri differs from *Morkinskinna* as to the death of Einar Thambarskelver, the old hero. *Morkinskinna* makes it part of King Harald's grievance against him that he, Einar, fell asleep when the king was telling his reminiscences. This is one of the three sorrows of story-telling, whatever the other two may be; no doubt such things happened in the early making of history. But Snorri has a different account, and this is taken from Hacon's Saga. So also is his account of Hacon and Svein Ulfsson, after the battle of Niz, which has been already referred to. It is true that this is not among the extant fragments of Hacon Ivarsson, but in the fragments the significant word is found, the name "Vandráðr," "Redeless," which Svein used in his escape, and which is not found elsewhere

¹ Ed. Storm in *Snorres Historieskriuning*, pp. 236-259.

except in Snorri. It is one of the great examples of Icelandic art, that device which never grows old, of letting things make their own impression before the explanation comes. Here, however, the explanation may be given first ; it is the story of a meeting between King Svein (Adam of Bremen's friend) and Earl Hacon Ivarsson after Hacon had offended him and left his service and gone back to the tyrant, Harald Hardrada. Svein and Harald were at warfare all their days, as Adam tells, and the battle of Niss Water was one of their chief actions—a sea battle off the Halland coast—in which the Danes were utterly beaten, and the old exile, Finn Arnason, St. Olaf's man, was taken prisoner by St. Olaf's brother. That is another story. The story of Svein's escape is shortly this : Hacon's ship could not follow when the ships of King Harald were pursuing the Danes ; the crowd of ships was too great. Hacon was tending his own wounded men, when a boat came up alongside with a big man, in a broad-brimmed hat, rowing, who called for the Earl. The Earl looked at him, and asked him his name. " Redeless is my name," he said ; " speak to me a moment, Earl ! " The Earl looked over the gunwale at him. Then the man in the boat said : " I will take my life from you to-day, if you will give it." The Earl rose and called to two of his men whom he could trust, and said : " Get into the boat and row Redeless ashore ; and guide him to my friend Karl, the yeoman, and say to Karl (so that he may understand) to let Redeless have the horse I gave him the day before yesterday, and his own saddle and his son to show him the way." Then the Earl's men went into the boat and took the oars, and Redeless steered. This was just about dawn, and there was a great traffic in the water, some were

rowing ashore and some to sea, both in large boats and small. Redeless steered where he saw the freest space between ships. When any Norwegians rowed near them, the Earl's men said who they were, and no one stopped them. Redeless steered along the shore, and did not put to land till they had got clear of the crowd of ships. Then they went up to Karl's homestead, and by that time it was daybreak ; they went in, and there was Karl just dressed. The Earl's men gave him their message ; Karl said they should breakfast first, had the table set, and brought them water to wash their hands. Then came in the good wife and said : " It is strange we can't get sleeping at night for shrieking and noise." Karl says : " Do you not know there has been a battle of the kings this night ? " She asked : " Who has won ? " " The men of Norway," he answered. She said : " Then our king has fled again ? " Karl says : " People do not know whether he is fled or fallen." She answered : " We have ill-luck in our king ; he is both lame and a coward." Then said Redeless : " Coward he is not, but he has no fortune in war."

Redeless was the last to wash his hands, and when he took the towel he dried his hands in the middle of it. The good wife pulled it away from him, and said : " Little wit ! see the clownish ways of him, to wet the whole towel at once ! " Redeless said : " I will come yet to the house where I may have leave to take the whole of the towel." Then they sat down, and Redeless sat in the middle. After breakfast they went out, and there the horse stood ready, and Karl's son was to have another horse and act as guide. They rode into the wood ; but the Earl's men went back to the boat, and so on board again.

The story of Karl and his wife is given in other versions, but they do not give the appeal of Redeless to Earl Hacon. It was well known that Hacon had helped King Svein to escape, but it is this one version, taken from Hacon's Saga by Snorri, which gives the truth, as we may suppose—certainly something like the truth—in characteristic Icelandic form.

This informal discourse may give some notion of the way in which the traditional book of the Kings of Norway was put together. Where so much is mysterious it is proved that the kings were fond of talking about themselves, that very early there were people engaged in taking notes, and others in testing them and proving the dates ; that before the end of the thirteenth century there was a rich Icelandic prose literature, in which different forms of the Norwegian historical matter were presented, some tending outwards and making large circuits and sweeping in all sorts of reminiscences and tales (like *Morkinskinna*), others (like *Fagrskinna*) making an attempt to restrict and select and give form to the material of tradition. One result of all this is a certain discontent with *Heimskringla*. That elegant work does not make the older versions superannuated or useless ; it leaves out some of the best things, *e.g.* the proverbs of Sveinke (ancestor of Sam Weller) :

“ No need of rollers, as the fox said, when he drew the harp over the ice ” ; and “ It's sniffing of snow, said the Finns, when they had snow-shoes to sell.” Which are illustrations of a political argument, as well as of characters and manners.

Another great omission is the story of Sigurn Hranason's law-suit, in which he was helped with legal skill by King Eystein against Sigurd the Crusader ¹

¹ Cf. G. Storm, *Sigurd Raneson's Process*.

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Worst of all is that which has been mentioned already, which is taken by Gudbrand Vigfusson as the chief ground of his depreciation of *Heimskringla*, as the refusal to admit, as part of the history of Olaf Tryggvason, the mortal sorrow of his queen and his hound Vigi, and the fulfilment of the blind yeoman's prophecy as to the loss of the four jewels of Norway. What are the canons of historical criticism that rejected this? Did the author of *Heimskringla* not believe the story? But he tells about the wizard who took the form of a whale, and was sent by King Harald of Denmark to survey the Iceland coasts. This is a good story, but the author who repeats it cannot afford to be scrupulous. He cannot give himself out, or be accepted as a true, sound rationalist historian. Why did he swallow the whale?

XXIX

GUDMUND ARASON

THIS lecture was to have been given in February ; when the Committee altered the date to the 16th of March, I wonder whether they meant to give Bishop Gudmund the honour due to his day. For this 16th of March is his anniversary ; this is " Gvendar dagr " (Gvend's or Gudmund's day), as it is familiarly called, with the homely, shortened form of the name " Guðmundr." If they did not intend this, it is something like a miracle ; which reminds me of a story belonging to the times and records of Gudmund himself, a very characteristic piece of Icelandic scepticism, rationalism and clearness of speech. A conversation is reported between two great chiefs in the year 1220, after a fight against the Bishop and his men :

Arnor said to Sighvat, " It has been a hard bout, kinsman ! "

" Aye, hard indeed ! " says he.

Arnor said : " I have been poorly all the summer ; but when word came to me from Reekdale that they wanted help, all my aches left me, so that now I am as fresh as ever I was in my life."

" That is what you might call a miracle," said Sighvat.

Arnor answers : " It is what I would call an occurrence and not a miracle." ¹

¹ " Slíkt kalla ek atburð, en eigi jarteign." St. I. p. 242.

And then they went on to business, penning up the bishop's men in the churchyard at Helgastadir.

Perhaps the action of the Committee is only an occurrence and not a miracle ; but at any rate it has happened so, and the choice of the day is no bad omen.

The life of Gudmund Arason has some historical importance, if Iceland and Norway are matters of historical concern at all, which we will not doubt in this society. He lived in a time when Iceland was rapidly going to ruin, through the loss of the old healthy balance in society between the well-to-do and the poorer families. The danger had been noted long before this. The older sagas, which are mainly heroic, admit some element of satire into them, and allow one to understand how the great men might sometimes appear to the lower orders : as in that wonderful scene of the death of Kiartan (in *Laxdæla Saga*), where one gets the view of the churlish common man as spectator : " Let them fight it out ; much harm it will do if they kill one another."

Stórbokkar, " big bucks," was an affectionate term applied to the great men ; and the purport of *Bandamanna Saga* is to show how vain and pusillanimous some of those big bucks were : how eight of them combined to keep down a rising, self-made man ; and how their victim's elderly but ingenious father split up their league and exposed them to general derision. This saga, I have thought, is not unlike the comedy of *Le Mariage de Figaro*, just before the Revolution, spreading amazement by its satire on the nobles ; or like the voice in Andersen's story, " Hear what the innocent child says : the Emperor has nothing on ! "

Now, a hundred years or so after the time of *Bandamanna Saga*, the rich men were growing richer, more

ambitious, more covetous, the poor were more dependent. The smaller gentry were dying out; large estates falling into few hands. "A condition of Iceland question," to adapt Carlyle's phrase, was vividly present to many minds in those days, and illustrated in a flamboyant manner by innumerable slaughters and butcheries. The great men, in some ways better educated than their heathen ancestors, had inherited their lively ways, and used the old methods freely in their game of "beggar my neighbour."

It is this business that is the theme of the *Sturlunga Saga*, written by a member of one of the ambitious families. For it is remarkable how literature flourished through all the ruin. They were reading men, not a few of the self-willed and luxurious persons who carried on the civil wars. The greatest Icelandic man of letters, Snorri Sturluson, was one of them; one of his nephews, Sturla Thord's son, is the author of the *Sturlunga Saga* and the *Life of King Hacon of Norway*, which ought to be reckoned among the first historical books of the Middle Ages. Another nephew, also a Sturla (son of the Sighvat who has already been mentioned), though not himself of the same original talent as his uncle or his cousin, was fond of books and of history. They were like people of the Italian renaissance, making the best of the contemplative not less than the practical life; artists as well as swordsmen.

The history of Norway, as told in Sturla's life of King Hacon († 1263), is a counterpart to that of Iceland, as told in *Sturlunga Saga*. The two countries were going through the same process, the same trial, with different conditions and very different chances of success. A comparison of the two gives some measure of the value of a king in the twelfth and the thirteenth

century. The life of King Hacon, like that of Sverre before him, is a contest with anarchy, a course of drilling, by means of which the country was saved from disruption. The danger in Norway always was that it would bring back the days of the old *neskonungar*, before Harald Fairhair, when every headland had a king of its own. Sverre and Hacon proved that the Norman genius for political discipline had not wholly withdrawn from its ancestral land : they had the same sort of talent for ruling that the great Normans had, and they used it successfully to bring the dangerous great men under control and establish the Norwegian monarchy.

In Iceland, which had been first founded as a refuge for the old Norwegian freedom by the chiefs of the opposition to Harald Fairhair, it seemed in the thirteenth century as if the principle of monarchy were avenging itself ; for Iceland, after a century or two of republican prosperity, was now, more or less, at the mercy of the immoderate great houses, and there was no king to make peace with a strong hand ; it was anarchy without a police-constable. One single author, Sturla, closely acquainted with both countries, has given the history of both in his two masterpieces.

It was at the beginning of this age of anarchy that there appeared some signs of a new movement in the Church. Both in Norway and Iceland the claims of Churchmen were added to the native elements of confusion. The Church in Iceland was very different from the Church of most other countries in the twelfth century. It was not in any close relation to Rome ; it was comfortably dependent on the State. The Bishops were elected by the people ; the churches and their glebes belonged to the landlords, who put their

sons into good livings, and generally did not encourage the sin "of being righteous overmuch." The Bishops and clergy very commonly lived like their lay kinsfolk; they had the same worldly interests; they were usually married men with families. It was all rather like England in the eighteenth century. Iceland had found a good working compromise between religion and the world, and did not wish to change.

Trouble came from Norway, where much the same habits and conditions were to be found. Archbishop Eystein of Nidaros had been in Rome in his youth, and had strong Roman ideas; he tried to enforce them in Norway, one result of which was that he had to leave the country. He was at Bury St. Edmund's in 1181, and stayed there for some time, as is written in the chronicle of Jocelyn of Brakelonde.

Lay patronage was one of the things he set himself to put down, and one of the things upheld with vigour by the adversary, King Sverre, in his controversy with the Bishops and the great Pope, Innocent III., some years after Eystein's death.

It was through Archbishop Eystein that St. Thorlac in Iceland, as Bishop of Scalholt, tried to get the churches out of the hands of the lay patrons. How he fared is told in his life, and may be read in the *Origines Islandicae* in English; the tale of the men of Oddi (*Oddaverja Þáttur*) is the name of this chapter, recounting the dispute between St. Thorlac and the great Jón Loptsson, whose son Paul was afterwards Bishop of Scalholt himself. Bishop Thorlac was not successful, and in Norway, about the same time, King Sverre was putting into forcible Norwegian, stiffened with quotations from the fathers, his theory of monarchy, of the independence and Divine Right of kings, including by

the way the rights of lay patrons, whose fathers had built the churches, who themselves kept up the churches, and who were not going to give them up to a Bishop against the old laws of Norway.

Gudmund became Bishop of Holar, the northern diocese, in 1202, the year that King Sverre died. He was forty years old ; he had lived a good life, and made himself a reputation as a priest. Those who knew him loved him, and he had already, thus early, much of the popular fame which has survived to the present day. The great man of the North, Kolbein Tumason of Skagafirth, thought he would make a good Bishop. Kolbein had the election in his hands ; there is a very good account of the proceedings, thoroughly irregular according to the Canon Law, but quite in harmony with the usage and constitution of Iceland. So Kolbein, with the ordinary legitimate influence of a country gentleman, made Gudmund Arason Bishop of Holar.

What followed was something like the history of Thomas à Beckett, acted on the small domestic theatre which was all that Iceland could afford. The scale is very different from the great drama of King Henry and his Chancellor, but it is with good reason that the editor of the Icelandic life of St. Thomas (Mr. Eiríkr Magnússon) has called attention to Bishop Gudmund in his Preface, and explained the influence of St. Thomas on the Northern Church. I do not indeed think that Bishop Gudmund's policy can be ascribed to the bad example of St. Thomas, though I have no doubt that St. Thomas helped. The Church policy had been shaping this way for more than forty years ; and we cannot leave Archbishop Eystein or St. Thorlac out of account, while the excommunications used by Bishop Gudmund have their precedent in those directed against

Sverre, described by him with his usual command of language as "cursing and swearing." He was a most amusing King, though a great sorrow to all Bishops—what would be called in some places a "black Protestant": I use the term without passion or prejudice. The life of King Sverre (so admirably translated by Mr. Sephton) is not to be neglected in dealing with the Iceland of those days.

Gudmund showed almost at once that he was not going to be the ordinary tame Bishop. He asserted the rights of the clergy in a vehement way, going even beyond St. Thorlac in his claims. It was not the rights of patrons, it was the authority of the courts that he challenged: he tried to withdraw the clergy from lay jurisdiction, both civil and criminal, and his adversary was he who had made him what he was, Kolbein Tumason.

The author of the life brings out very clearly and significantly, though naturally, in the quiet way of the Icelandic school of history, without any gesticulation or emphasis, that there began to be disagreement from the first between Kolbein and Gudmund, owing to Kolbein's rather bluff and arbitrary assumption of control over the Bishop's income and expenditure. Kolbein took, as if it were a matter of course, the whole management of the estate: it is true that this was before Gudmund's consecration: still it is evident that Kolbein showed a want of the finer shades in his conduct. One is allowed to suppose that Gudmund felt the slight. He belonged to a proud race. There are few more honourable men in Icelandic history than those of Gudmund's family: his grandfather, Thorgeir, his uncles Thorvard and Ingimund (of whom more is to be told later); his father, Ari, who was killed in Norway, defending the

King at the cost of his life. In his youth Gudmund had been noted, like Wordsworth, for his stiff, moody and violent temper. After his shipwreck, in his nineteenth year, it was thought that a great change had come over him, and in the score of years that had passed since then he had gained the reputation of a saint (though there were some who mocked) by his austerities, his alms-giving, his miraculous powers. But it is plain enough from his story that the old pride was all alive in him, and the historians do not conceal it.

The ecclesiastical policy went along with the common motives of feud. Gudmund, in the first part of his life, had been engaged in the usual sort of feuds and lawsuits, and had seen his enemies discomfited. Now, for five and thirty years, he was to be plunged in strife, a partner and an active cause of endless wild and murderous feats, such as the older sagas knew, but multiplied now, and with the horrors intensified. The cruelty of the Sturlung Age was perhaps greater than that of the old heathendom: it was certainly far beyond the measure allowed by public opinion in the days of Njal.

Gudmund is greatly blamed by some historians; perhaps not without some jealousy against his High Church principles. He certainly tried to get new ideas into people's heads regarding the nature of the Church, and he broke the common law of Iceland when he denied the authority of the courts over priests. He was reckless and imprudent; he dealt his bans of excommunication till the people were weary of him and his bans; his crowd of poor men, his ragged regiment, was a nuisance. Politically his life was a failure; Rome threw him over at the end.

But can it be said that he did much, or anything, to hasten the fall of the Republic, the dissolution of the

healthy old Icelandic commonwealth? Probably not. We have a very full account of the particulars of life in Iceland in those days, and we know that it did not need the questions of ecclesiastical policy to set people fighting. The fighting and flocking went on as it had done ever since Iceland, ever since Norway was a home of men, and from the same natural motives; from just such quarrels as make Farmer Goodwin sulky with Farmer Jones: stupid mistakes about sheep, bad blood, malicious gossip, original sin and actual transgression—there needed no Bishop nor Canon Law to make things worse. And the peculiar exasperation of feuds in the thirteenth century did not come from the imprudent Churchmen: it came from the bloated wealth and pride of a few great men, as aforesaid; whose large estates and close family connections led them into trouble in manifold ways, and made the range of operations larger, the fever of enmity more malignant.

In the old days, when there was a much larger proportion of smaller gentry, a feud could get itself fought out and settled in a more or less decent manner. When the enemy had been killed, and an ordinary number of vengeance taken on the one side or the other, the thing might die away. The parties were essentially law-abiding persons. It may seem paradoxical to say so, but it is borne out by the sagas. The law, sooner or later, makes itself felt, that law which, as the Bremen chronicler remarked, is the only King in Iceland. The enemies of Gunnar, the burners of Njal, had no particular aim beyond their vengeance. They did not wish to live disorderly lives. They were private persons, not aiming at a tyranny.

In the Sturlung Age it is different. Now there are

schemes for family aggrandisement, like those of Italy. The crafty man of old times, Snorri the Priest, has but a mean business and humble aims compared with his namesake, Snorri the Historian, or with Earl Gizur.

It was not mainly for historical or political reasons that I was led to choose this subject. My motive was a different one, simpler and less ambitious; it is a motive that is present with all readers of the sagas, whether those of the heroic age or those of the thirteenth century—merely the love of stories. I have to repeat what is well enough known; but however well known, it is never stale to anyone who has read the Icelandic books. There is nothing equal to them anywhere for their power of recording life. To use the words of Landor about his own poems, they are not prismatic but diaphanous; those who look into them can see through. One looks through into the tenth century, into the thirteenth, one sees men there, not “as trees walking”; one hears their conversation, not muffled in a learned language (like so many good things in Giraldus Cambrensis and Matthew Paris), not dressed up with rhetoric, not paraphrased or otherwise cooked, but their very words. It is true, and fortunately true, that good memoirs are common in all times and languages. But nowhere are things seen, and heard, so clearly as in the Icelandic stories.

In this society I daresay there will be little dispute about that point, and I do not wish to labour it. There is, however, one general fact about Iceland which may be worth bringing forward again, in connection with their story-telling, as a partial explanation of their success, at any rate as a great advantage. Most of the scenes were well known to the people who heard the

sagas. This comes partly from the shape of the country, partly from the conditions of life there.

Though Iceland is a large country, larger than Ireland, the inhabited, the human part of it, round the coast, is easily known in its main lines : it can be " taken in " more readily than any land of its size. From Reykjavik you see the dome of Snaefell, seventy miles away, and the line of the Snaefell peninsula, the tops growing out of the sea. From the hills about the middle of the north coast between Eyjafirth and Skagafirth—they are no great height, an ordinary Cumberland height—you can see clearly to the Hornstrands in the north-west, on the other side of the Húnaflói, beyond the Skagafirth hills. In the north and west quarters, where the scenes of most of the stories are laid, the landscapes are generally wide, with many famous places in the view, as when looking back from Vidimyri over the open Skagafirth valley—the Strath, as one is tempted to call it—one picks out *Flugumyri* under the hill, and *Drangey* to the left of it in the fjord. Or looking from Borg inland to the plains of Whitewater and the ring of mountains at the back, one makes out on the left of the line to Holtbeaconheath and the north, and in the middle one knows where Reykholt lies, which gives one way, inland and round about, to the plains of the Althing ; and on the right, across the water, the way to Skorradal, which will take you to Whalefirth, and so, if you will, to the Althing again. The main ways are well known, and those who heard the sagas had travelled most of them, so that the theatre is well prepared for the action, and well understood. One is not confused, as in more populous countries, by the sense of large towns and the nameless, unknown multitudes. The country is intelligible, like that of the

Pilgrim's Progress. There is seldom much of a crowd in Iceland. Men are known as individuals. It is the world, one might say, of the drama or the novel, rather than of ordinary history: the houses are separate, distinct, and well known; the men are distinct also, not swallowed up in the common degrading idea of "population."

Gudmund's story, of course, comes much later than the heroic sagas of Njal and Egil Skallagrimsson, of Gisli or Grettir; and that is one reason for speaking about it here. It is part of the Sturlung history, that is the history of Iceland at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century, when the sons and grandsons of Sturla of Hvamm came to be one of the most powerful families in Iceland. Sturla Thordarson, one of those grandsons, wrote the story; and Gudmund, Bishop of Holar, is one of the chief characters in his book. But Sturla, though the greatest, is not the only memoir-writer of those times. There are other books by other authors dealing with Gudmund and his friends; the Priest's Saga of Gudmund, that is, his biography down to his election as Bishop, and the voyage to Norway for his consecration: the life of Hrafn Sveinbjörn's son, who went with Gudmund on this same voyage—Hrafn the wise and generous, one of the best men of his time; the life of Aron Hjörleifsson, a younger friend of Gudmund, who began as a lively, adventurous, reckless person, one of the Bishop's less respectable associates. He was outlawed, and had a time of wandering, with many dangers and escapes. But he got clean away at last to Norway, and prospered there, and came to honour in the service of King Hacon.

There are other records of Gudmund, but they are later, and there is no time nor need to speak of them

here, and little time to speak of the chief documents, Sturlunga and the biographies. What is common to these, and what chiefly makes their character and their value, is that they use the form of the old heroic sagas and apply it to contemporary things. The heroic sagas are at some distance from the reality. Egil and Njal came down in tradition before they were written out fair. But Sturla and the author of the Saga of Priest Gudmund are dealing with contemporary or nearly contemporary things. They are close to the reality ; and reality appears to them, and is read by them, like an heroic tale. That is the miracle : or at least " that is the occurrence." Real life seems to compose itself, to shape itself, into Epic, into a novel : what Fielding called an epic history in prose.

This is one reason for studying the biography of Bishop Gudmund, apart from all grave questions at issue between the spiritual and the temporal power. It belongs to a small class of fine literature, which has nothing quite equal to it anywhere else ; a kind of history, not fictitious, which yet begins in imagination and dramatic sense, and has been trained to use its imagination sincerely. It is not " medieval " except in some accidental ways ; it is neither " classical " nor " romantic," though it is often both. It is simply right. I will read the story of the shipwreck on the Horn-strands :

Life of Gudmund c. 6 (St. I., p. 95).

In the spring of 1180 when Gudmund was 19, Priest Ingimund [his uncle] begins to think of a voyage to Norway, and Gudmund, his ward, with him. They took passage at Gásir (Eyjafirth) with Hallstein Hunchback, and sailed on Sunday the day before Michaelmas. The wind took them East under the Nouns to the Foxes' plain [Melrakkaslétta] : then came a headwind and they drove before it, and tumbled

about for a week, and drifted to the Hornstands. One evening as they were at supper the awning tore open at the edge. A man called Asmund, an Easterling [Norwegian], looks out and suddenly cries :

" Whish ! down with the awning, up boys and clear the decks ! We are on the breakers—never mind your supper this time ! " Then they all jump at once and get in the awning. Hallvard, the mate, calls out :

" Where is the ship's chaplain ? "

" Not far to look for him," says Ingimund. " What do you want with him ? "

" We want to confess," said they.

He answers : " It is no better time for confession than it was this autumn every Sunday, when I preached to you to come to confession in the name of God : and you would never hear. Now I must even pray to God to hear you ; for I am no more at home on the sea than you are : be bold and keep a good heart."

They said : " Then you must make a vow along with us, a pilgrimage or some other large vow : nothing less will do."

" Nothing less," says Ingimund : " I will vow, if I may order what the vow shall be. Or else I will give my word for every Icelander on board that not a man of them will be with you in the vowing : for I will not be under your rule now any more than you were under mine in these last weeks on shore."

" What then wilt thou vow, Priest ? " said the men from Norway.

" I will vow to Almighty God and Holy Cross, to our Lady St. Mary and All Saints, to give a tithe of all that comes safe on shore to churches or poor men as the bishop shall dispose."

They answered : " Thou shalt give the word, Priest, for we cannot do now without thy care." Now pledges are given all over the ship to keep this vow. And by this time they are well in among the breakers. Then there is a great dispute what is best to be done, and every man wants his own way. Some are for hoisting the sail, and they begin at this. Then Hallvard the mate asks Ingimund if he knows the highest name of God.¹

¹ The 72 names of God are still used in perils by land or water. See note by Paul Meyer, *Flamenca* (1865), p. 317.

He answers : " I know some names of God ; and I believe what the Apostle Paul says, that there is no name higher nor holier than the name of Jesus—but what thou callest the highest name I know not."

He answers : " I do not reckon such to be priests who do not know the name of God."

Then Ingimund calls to Hallvard : " Dost thou know the highest name ? "

" God's truth," says Hallvard, " I scarcely think I can get my tongue to it now, and sorry for it. But Thord Crow (Kráka) will know. Thord Crow ! canst thou name the high name ? "

He says : " Worse luck, mate, it is slipped my mind, but some one else is sure to know. Thorbiorn Humla (Hops) will know."

" Aye aye ! well well ! Thorbiorn Humla, name the name if thou canst ! "

He says : " I wish I could ; but as far as I can tell, I never heard it : but I will show you a man that can, I think Einar Næpa (Neep, Turnip) knows."

Then they tried him, and he names the name. And when they had the sail up no more than the height of a man there comes a great beam sea breaking over the freight¹ amidships and fore and aft as well. Every man was at a rope then, and Ingimund caught hold of a boathook, and tried to bring down the sail. Gudmund, his ward, had a berth in the ship's boat : he was standing between the boat and the sail, to see the sail clear. Then comes another heavy sea over the whole ship, and carries off the vane of the mast and both the bulwarks, and overboard everything loose amidships, except men ; and the ship was much knocked about and the boat as well. Then they come through the breakers, and get a third sea, not so heavy as the others. Then they rushed to the bailing, fore and aft, and a piece of sail was hoisted.

Then they see land, and talk it over where they might have come : some said they must be at Malmey ; but Thorarin Rosti, an Icelfander, said that would be too short for all the time they had been driving. Then Mar Eyjolf's son speaks, and says he knows they are off the Hornstrands

¹ Búlki ; the cargo was piled in the waist and rose up in a mound, which was roped in and tightly fenced.

at Skjaldabjarnarvik, and said he had been there before, that summer. Then they asked him to lay them a course for a harbour, and wished to go North to Tharalats Fjord; for there was a safe harbour there.

Then they looked about to see what damage was done, and Ingimund comes to Gudmund, his nephew. Now the big sea had cast him into the boat, and his right leg hung over the gunwale of the boat and was caught in the sail. Ingimund asked why he did not get up. And he said there was such a weight on him that he could not stir nor stand. Then the loose sail was rolled off him; but still he did not rise. Ingimund asked why. He said his foot was so heavy he could not move it.

"The leg is broken," says Ingimund.

"I know not," says Gudmund. "I have no feeling in it."

Then they looked, and the leg was broken on the gunwale, the bones in shivers, and the toes pointing where the heels should be. So they put him to bed in the boat. Then Ingimund missed his trunk of books; it had gone overboard. And he was hard hit, as he thought; for there was his pleasure where his books were; and the man crippled that he loved best. Yet he gave thanks to God; and thought there had been a quick fulfilment of his dream. For the night before he had dreamt of Archbishop Eystein, how he came to the Archbishop and was bidden welcome. He had told the dream to Gudmund, and Gudmund's reading of it was that there was some "arch business" ahead for them. And that same day, before they had come to rough water, Magnus Amundason had asked whether anyone knew of any breakers called "The Humps." And he was told that there were such, namely, off the Horn-strands.

"I dreamt," he says, "that we were near them." And a little after he had said that, they were aware of the breakers.

Now they are carried North, off Reykjafjord. Then they bring up, and lower the sail and cast anchor, and lie at anchor there all night. In the morning they get to land with planks from the ship, and cut down their mast and let it drive ashore, with a line fast to the ship. Then they debated what should be done with Gudmund.

Then up speaks a man called Bersi, who went by the name of Corpselight—one of his cheeks was coal-black—and says :

“ Why should we trouble about a sick man, and his leg broken, when we have enough to do to save ourselves ? Send him overboard ! ”

Thorarin Rosti answered : “ Hold the blasted tongue of thee ! Send thee overboard thyself, and little loss ! We must think of another way.”

He jumps overboard at once, and Einar Neep along with him. The moving of the ship had brought her aground, and they let down Gudmund over the side in a web of wadmál, and Thorarin and Einar took him one on each side, and he sat on their arms with a hand about the neck of either man. And some men went behind to make some shelter from the seas. And so they made their way ashore, drawn backward by the downdraught of the sea, and sped onward as the new wave caught them. And they brought him to land. Then the ship canted seaward, and all that was in her went into the sea, and she broke up all to flinders, and little of her freight came to land.

At that place lived a man called Snorri, son of Argeir ; he was a leech. He takes Gudmund and brings him home with him, and treats him as well as he can ; his house was not a rich one, but his will was good. Many men came to the place from the neighbouring homesteads to see what they could do for them or their goods. Then Ingimund made a vow and prayer that his book-trunk and his books might come to land. A few nights later news came that the box had come ashore at the Drongs, and everything in it that might be looked for ; one hasp was holding and the other two were broken ; and all the other chests that came ashore were broken and empty. Ingimund went there to dry his books ; and was there till Martinmas. Then he came back to see his ward and learn how his leg was mending.

Ingimund is a fine character, and his later history is given : adventures in Norway, and a last voyage to Greenland, where he and his company were wrecked and lost. Their bodies were found many years after-

wards, and along with them were tablets where Ingimund had written down their story.

In the rest of the life of Gudmund there is nothing quite as full, detailed and lively as the shipwreck story : that adventure stands out from the others. One may remark, by the way, that there is something more than history in it, a comic or satiric motive, springing from the old humorous difference between Icelanders and Norwegians. The Norwegians were sometimes rude to the Icelanders : they called them " tallow-sausages," with other similar names. Here the Icelandic author takes revenge in a genial way, by merely recording the rather helpless and flurried talk of the Norwegian shipmen.

There are other things nearly as good, though none so thoroughly imagined and presented as this. It would take long to repeat them. One ought not to forget the boy Skúma, and how he helped the Bishop to escape from his enemies one night of storm and sleet, when his friend Eyjolf Karsson came and stole him out of the bothy on Whitewater-side, and the boy took his place and lay quiet in bed till the morning. " Beardie (*Kampi*) is sleeping long to-day," said the Bishop's enemies, who had themselves been snoring hard when Eyjolf came.

Among the heroic passages of the Sturlung time one of the finest is the death of Eyjolf Karsson in Grimsey, when the Bishop was attacked by Sighvat and his son Sturla. It is translated in *Epic and Romance* (pp. 433-436) from *Aron's Saga*. The adventures of Aron himself, after Eyjolf had helped him to escape, are a thirteenth-century counterpart of the wanderings of Gisli and Grettir, told with the curious Icelandic talent for such things, especially in the way the interest is

kept up—situations apparently dangerous turning out all right in the end ; persons likewise. For the Icelandic art is unrivalled in its power of representing the way in which things happen ; the way in which a first impression is modified or refuted by later events. Read, for example, in chapter xii. of *Aron's Saga*, of his meeting with two strangers, and his ideas about them : it is not at all clear what is going to happen ; we are kept all along at the same points of view as Aron himself, and see life rolling out before us.

The life of Hrafn is one of the most complete, in one sense, of all the thirteenth-century books ; a biography, with deepening interest as it goes on, and at the same time its field narrowing to the tragic history of the contentions between Hrafn and his baser enemy, Thorvald Snorrason of Vatzfirth. None of the more strictly historical books have complied so well with the "unities" of prose epic. But besides the main theme there are many incidental beauties, little pictures of fleeting moments, like that of the poor man Amundi, a retainer of Hrafn's, who was one day cutting hay on his grass-patch, and his wife, with the baby at her back, raking after him : when a gang of Thorvald's men came up to get him to join them against Hrafn, and he would not, so they killed him.¹ It is all in a dozen lines ; it is enough.

As I have said, it was not from any special interest in the policy of Gudmund that I chose this subject for my lecture ; nor is he the most attractive character in his own story. But it is impossible to refuse him the respect which his countrymen have paid, or the admiration due to his courage and his faith. Speaking on Gudmund's day, I cannot pass over the story of his

¹ *Hrafn's Saga*, c. 17 ; *Sturlunga Saga*, ii, p. 302.

death. He grew old and blind, and his last sickness came upon him ; but he would not die in his bed. There was got ready a hurdle strewn with earth, and when death was near they lifted him from his bed and put him there, on the bare mould : there was perhaps as much of the ancient Northman as of the Christian saint in this desire of his.

The popular regard for Bishop Gudmund was very great, and shown in many ways ; perhaps in none more significant than the stories of his dealings with the trolls. Every Northern hero may be called on to take up the task of Thor and go to " hammer the Trolls " ; St. Olaf is one of the most famous in this way ; and in Iceland Bishop Gudmund had many tasks of this kind. It must not be thought that the " soothfastness " of the thirteenth century, so definite in its account of the shipwreck and other adventures, is prejudiced against ghost-stories. On the contrary, some of the finest passages of terror and wonder are to be found in *Sturlunga Saga*, which is full of portents.

There is the dream of the man in Skagafirth, not long after the death of Kolbein Tumason, which is like the vision of the Fatal Sisters :

He thought he came to a great house ; and in it there were two women, as if they were rowing, swinging to and fro ; all blood-stained, and blood was dripping on them through the skylight ; and one of them chanted :

" Row we, row we, a rain of blood !
War and Battle, for the fall of men !
We must up and away to Raft lithe ;
There shall we be cursed and banned." ¹

Among the miracles of Gudmund, in the earliest life of him, it is noted how he had great power against

¹ I. p. 220 ; C.P.B. I. p. 360.

trolls. Once, when his body was asleep, he appeared far away to a poor man who was being persecuted by a troll-wife. His chief enemy was a horrible vampire thing called Selkolla, an inhuman body with a seal's head, and no end of ugly devices for escaping and returning. Public opinion among the trolls was strongly against him : it is a tradition in one part of Iceland that when Bishop Brand died a troll-wife was heard crying the news to her neighbour : " Now is Holabishop dead." But the other answered : " There is one coming next who is no better, and that is Gudmund." ¹

Gudmund, however, was not extreme with the trolls, whatever he might be with his other opponents. He was once, it is said, going over the little steep holn of Drangey, blessing it and casting out the trolls, when, after they had done their worst, there came a petition from them, in reasonable terms. In his purification of the island, which was carried out very thoroughly, he was let down by a rope over the cliffs to bless them. At one place a shaggy grey arm in a red sleeve came out of the rock with a knife, and cut two strands of his rope ; the third strand was hallowed and would not give, and the Bishop hung there.

Then a voice from the rock said : " Do no more hallowing, Bishop ; the Bad Folk must live somewhere."

The Bishop had himself hauled up, and left that corner as a reservation for trolls, so it is said.

¹ " Sá kemur aptr sem ekki er betri, og það er hann Gvöndur."

XXX

STURLA THE HISTORIAN

IT is natural, when the task one has to perform carries along with it so much honour and so much responsibility, to begin with a sentence of apology and depreciation. Words of that sort are not always insincere, but there is seldom much good in them. I have been asked by the University of Oxford to give the Romanes Lecture, and in acknowledgment I will take and apply to my own case the words of Dr. Johnson : " It was not for me to bandy civilities with my sovereign."

You will allow me to speak of Lord Curzon, who had promised to give the Romanes Lecture for this year ; and you will readily understand that I wish to say only what may be of good omen : to remember some of the associations of Balliol and All Souls, and to look forward to the time when Lord Curzon will come to Oxford and fulfil his undertaking. There is no place in the world, I believe, that sends him more sincere good wishes, or takes a deeper interest in his success and in his fame.

I have no need to defend my choice of a subject ; it is already authorised ; the University has published the *Sturlunga Saga*, edited by Gudbrand Vigfússon, with the help, as he tells us in his preface, of his friend

York Powell of Christ Church. This book contains among other things the Icelandic memoirs of Sturla the historian ; Sturla's Norwegian history, the life of King Hacon, with the same editor, has been printed by the Master of the Rolls. The study of Icelandic began long ago in Oxford ; an Icelandic grammar was printed here in 1689 for Dr. George Hickes, and afterwards included in his magnificent *Thesaurus*.

The history of Iceland often reads like a contradiction and refutation of a number of historical prejudices. It would require only a very slight touch of fancy or of travesty to make it into a kind of Utopian romance, with ideas something like those of William Godwin, or of Shelley. The Norwegian gentry who went out and settled in Iceland were driven there by their love of freedom, their objection to the new monarchy of Harald Fairhair. They did not want any government ; they took an entirely new land and made their homes there, and a commonwealth of their own. No man had lived before in Iceland except the few Irish hermits who had wandered there after the fashion of St. Brandan ; they soon disappeared, and their presence does nothing to impair the solitude, the utterly natural condition of Iceland when the Norwegians first took it. The colony of Iceland, further, was almost as free from institutions and constraints, in its early days, as any revolutionary philosopher could desire. The king had been left behind in the old country ; there was no tribal system, no priestly order, nothing to complicate the business of life. No abstract thinking, no political platforms, no very troublesome religion interfered with the plain positive facts. The Icelanders at first had little to think about except their houses and families ; they were not afraid of their gods, and had no exacting

ceremonies. It is one kind of an ideal. It is true that this Godwinian republic began rather early to fall away from simplicity ; perfect pure anarchy is too good for this world, and is soon corrupted. The Icelanders, before long, began to play the social contract, first of all by the voluntary agreement of neighbours under the presidency of the chief man of their country-side, then by an assembly of the whole island and the introduction of law. The paradoxes of the Icelandic constitution have been explained by Mr. Bryce in one of his lectures ; they might be summed up very roughly, as " all law and no government." *Apud illos non est rex nisi tantum lex.*¹ Their very careful law took them a long way from pure anarchy ; but there never was any political power to enforce the law. The local courts and the national assembly determined what was right, but there was no compulsion in the country, except public opinion and private revenge.

This commonwealth, founded in the days of Harald Fairhair and of Alfred the Great, is a kind of embodiment of the *Germania* of Tacitus, with the Germanic essence, so to speak, still further refined ; the independence, the spirit of honour, the positive, worldly, unmystical character, which seems to be capable of all heroism, except that of the visionary martyr.

When the Cardinal William came to Norway in the reign of King Hacon and got to know about the Icelanders, he was scandalised at their freedom, and sent a message to them to ask why they could not come in and be governed by a king, like the rest of the world. It is true enough that their ideas and ways were not those of the thirteenth century, and that they have the example of all Christendom against them.

¹ Quoted by Maurer, *Island*, from a gloss in Adam of Bremen.

Nevertheless, the Icelandic State in its pride, its seclusion, its opposition to the common way of the world, is a creation as miraculous as the contemporary achievements of the Northern race at the other end of the scale—I mean the political work of the Normans in the new-fashioned kingdom of England.

The intellectual fortunes of Iceland are as strange as its social history. There is the same mixture of very old Teutonic ideas with others that seem to have escaped the Middle Ages altogether, or at any rate to be more at home in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. Nowhere is this more manifest than in the histories of Iceland, the prose narrative literature of the republic, in which Sturla, son of Thord, is one of the last and one of the most eminent names. Icelandic prose of the great age is in contradiction to a number of things that are commonly believed and reported about medieval literature: such as, that it is quaint, absurd, superstitious, childish, without perspective. For example: the *Edda* of Snorri Sturluson is a thirteenth-century prose book that has very little to learn from any renaissance or revival of learning. The tone of it, in its treatment of the stories of the gods, is not what is generally supposed to be medieval; it is more like what one expects from the eighteenth century, amused, ironical, humorous. At the same time Snorri is generous to the old gods and thoroughly interested in their adventures. Peacock, in his dealing with Welsh antiquities, is the modern author who is most like Snorri in this respect, in this curious combination of levity and romance, so unlike the medieval earnestness on the one hand, the medieval farce on the other.

The great work of the Icelanders is to be found in their family histories; those to which the name *Saga*

is commonly given as if by some special right ; the stories of Njal, of Egil Skallagrimsson and other famous men of the early days. These books leave the ordinary critical formulas fluttering helplessly about them. They seem to accomplish what for several generations, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was one of the ideals of literary men, the heroic narrative in prose, the prose epic. For this was once a favourite ambition, one of the abstract ideas that tempted many writers, along with the perfect form of Tragedy, and the pattern of an Epic Poem. Cervantes in *Don Quixote* has given one of the best descriptions of this ideal by the mouth of the Canon of Toledo, explaining what might be made of prose romances if they were taken up by the right kind of author. The prose story, says the Canon, offers a large free field for all kinds of adventures, descriptions, and characters, for the craft of Ulysses, the valour of Achilles, the misfortunes of Hector, and so on. A web woven of many various strands—that shall be the new kind of romance ; a story written without exaggeration of style, and drawn truly ; using the freedom of prose narrative so as to include among other things both tragedy and comedy, “ with all those parts that are included in the most delightful and pleasant sciences of poetry and oratory ; for the epic may be written not less in prose than in verse.” Something of what is here outlined had been accomplished long before in the Icelandic Sagas—the wisdom of Njal, the valour of Gunnar and Skarphedin, the misfortunes of Grettir the Strong. Those Northern books are written sometimes with a spirit like that of Cervantes himself, with dialogue unmatched except in the great novelists.

This rich imaginative history had its source in real

life. Njal and Egil and their adventures were kept in traditional memory, their stories were the property of no one in particular, handed down from one age to another till the time came for them to be put into shape and written out in their present form. Icelandic prose is very near to the spoken language ; it is rich in idiom and in conversation, and the artistic form given to it by writing men seems to follow easily from the natural growth of the spoken traditional tale.

By the early part of the thirteenth century most of the old stories had been written ; and not only the Icelandic Sagas of the heroic age, but also the lives of the kings of Norway, which are best known in the work of Snorri, commonly called *Heimskringla*. In these *Kings' Lives* the largest space had been given to the two Olafs, Tryggvason and Haraldsson (St. Olaf) ; so that both for Iceland and Norway the tenth and early eleventh century—two hundred years before the time of Snorri—were better represented in literature than the later periods. But something had been done to bring down the memoirs of Iceland and the history of Norway to living memory, and it is here that Sturla the historian comes in, to complete the task.

He belonged to one of the great families of Iceland in the thirteenth century, the house of the Sturlungs, named from his grandfather, Sturla, of Hvamm. This family was one of the most ambitious, and did as much as any to spoil the old balance of the Commonwealth by "struggling for life" in a reckless, arrogant, lawless way. The strange thing about them is that, with all their dangerous, showy qualities, they produced some of the finest literature ; "out of the eater came forth meat." Snorri, son of Sturla, was for a long time one of the most persevering and successful capitalists of

that time, making his fortune, greedily, by all available means ; he is also great in Icelandic prose literature on account of his *Edda* and his *Kings' Lives*. His brother, Thord, had two sons, who were distinguished literary men : our Sturla the historian, who was also a poet, and Olaf the poet, who was also a philologist. Even the fighting men of the family might be fond of books : Sturla notes a fact of this sort about his cousin and namesake, Sturla Sighvatsson,¹ who was in practical life the perfection of that unscrupulous, light-hearted vanity which made all the sorrows of Iceland in those years.

" The Sturlung Age " is a name commonly given to the period described in the *Sturlunga Saga*—roughly, the first half of the thirteenth century, the time of the great faction fights in which the liberties of Iceland went under. The *Sturlunga Saga*, as we have it, is a composite work ; only part of it (and scholars are not agreed how much of it) is the work of Sturla, son of Thord. But he, the grandson of the founder of the house, wrote at any rate a large part of the history ; there is no doubt of that, so that for this time there exists not only a contemporary chronicle, but the memoirs of one who was most intimately concerned, himself one of the persons in the drama.

And his work is the completion of Icelandic prose. It is hardly a metaphor to say that it is the mind of Iceland, expressing itself in the best way at the end of the old Icelandic life. Sturla's work is the Icelandic habit of thought and vision applied to the writer's own experience, whereas in the heroic sagas it had dealt with things of a former age.

¹ " He (Sturla Sighvatsson) was much at Reykholt with Snorri, and made it his business to have copies written of the histories which Snorri composed " (*Sturlunga Saga*, vol. i. p. 299).

The beauty of it in both cases is its impartiality. But this is naturally more remarkable and surprising in the later than the earlier history. Sturla had been in the thick of it all himself, in many moss-trooping raids and forays ; he had seen his kinsmen cut down ; he had been driven to make terms with their chief enemy ; it was his own daughter who was snatched out of the fire of Flugumýri, where her young bridegroom lost his life. But there is nothing in his story to show that he takes a side. He follows the custom of the old sagas, which is, to let the characters alone and never allow the showman to come forward with his explanations and opinions. This Icelandic habit is not dullness or want of sense. It is a kind of imagination, and it is shown in their way of narrating things so as to get the most vivid effect. You see a boat putting out from an island, or a party of men riding along the shore ; you do not know whether they are friends or enemies until you go to find out. Two people of importance are talking business ; a messenger comes to one of them and speaks with him apart ; then he turns to his business again and you find that there is a change of some sort ; the messenger has told him something of interest, and you see this in his face and his conduct before you get it explained. The vague fact growing clearer, that is the Icelandic rule of story-telling, the invariable plan ; it would be a mannerism, if it were not so much alive. Mannerisms are lazy things, dodges for getting along easily without thought ; but this Icelandic form is exacting and not easy ; the right use of it means that the author is awake and interested.

It is impossible here to give any proper account of Sturla's Icelandic memoirs, and I shall not quote from his chronicle of slaughter and house-burnings. But

there are other passages in his work besides those "high facinorous things," as the Elizabethan poet might have called them ; there are intervals of comedy.

There is a scene between Sighvat and his son, Sturla, which is very pleasant to think about ; the father reading the son's character, playing on his vanity, and drawing him on gradually to a comic trap. The young man had just come back in high spirits from a successful expedition, where he had beaten the other side. His father says to him : " You have had a fight, I hear." " So we made out," says the son. " It was a short squall," says Sighvat. " Not so short, either." " You will be wanting to set up a new house somewhere," says Sighvat, " and I have been thinking what will be good enough for you." And then he goes on scheming great things for his son, who doesn't see the danger, but takes it all as his due, as if his father were showing a very proper appreciation of his merits. Sighvat plans out the household for him : " You will want a bailiff and a housekeeper ; a shepherd ; a man to attend to the horses ; another for the boats and for trading." In each case he makes suggestions of the proper people to take office ; the mischief being that he names people rather too good for the situation, beginning fairly low down and gradually rising to more and more dignified names, till it dawns upon his son that he is being chaffed. At last Sighvat proposes for his son's servants two of the greatest personages in the island ; and the glorious young man flings out of the room in a passion. His father stays behind, well content.

All this was repeated and gave great amusement. The story was told to Lopt, the Bishop's son, who was immensely pleased with Sighvat's wit, and particularly with the way in which he had allotted the parts

in his imaginary housekeeping ; till he found that he himself had been put down for the charge of the horses. Then his language was strong : " Devil take their fleeing and jeering ! They will find soon that people have other things to do besides currying their favour ! "

It is in this sort of domestic comedy that the Icelandic stories are most different from other medieval books.

In the year 1262 came the submission of Iceland to Norway, " the end of an auld sang." In 1263 Sturla was ruined, to all appearances. He had been dragged into trouble by an ill-conditioned son of his, and was beaten by his adversary, Hrafn Oddsson, and had to leave Iceland. He resolved to go to Norway to try for the favour of the king. Hacon by this time had set out on his great expedition to Scotland, but the young King Magnus, who had been already crowned, was at home with his queen, the Danish lady Ingiborg. This was the beginning of Sturla's Norwegian historical work, and this is the story of his visit to King Magnus :

STURLA AND KING MAGNUS

Sturla sailed for Norway from Eyre [in the South of Iceland] ; he had scarcely any supplies with him. They had a good voyage and took the land at Bergen ; Magnus the king was there ; as also was Gaut of Mel. Sturla went at once to find Gaut. Gaut was pleased and said : " Art thou Sturla the Icelander ? " " That is so," said Sturla. Gaut said, " You are welcome at my table like the other Sturlungs." " No house would be better for me, as far as I can see," said Sturla. So he went to stay with Gaut and told him clearly the whole story of his coming to Norway ; and Gaut, on the other hand, told him how he had been evil spoken

of with Magnus the king, and still more with Hacon. A little after Gaut and Sturla went to King Magnus. Gaut paid his respects to the king, and he took it well ; Sturla did the same, but he made no answer. He said : " Tell me, Gaut, who is this man that goes along with you ? " Gaut said : " This man is Sturla, Thord's son, the poet, and he is come to throw himself on your grace ; and I think him, sir, to be a wise man." The king said : " We think of him that he would not have come here of his own accord ; he must put it to the proof when he meets my father." Gaut said : " Even so, for I think he has poems to offer to you and your father." " It is not likely that I will have him put to death," said King Magnus, " but he shall not come into my service." Then they went away, and when they came to their lodging Gaut said to Sturla : " The king seemed very slow to take you up, but he has put you out of danger ; there must have been much evil speaking against you." Sturla says : " I have no doubt of that, nay, I seem to make out clearly that Hrafn has been spreading slanders ; all kinds of things were mixed up together in Iceland, small and great, truth and lies."

The next day Gaut went down to the king's house. When he came back and met Sturla he said : " Now you are provided for, since the king wishes you to come with him when he sails for the South." Sturla answered : " Shall not the king decide ? But I have no great mind to go from here."

Then he got ready to sail away with the king, and his name was put on the list. He went on board before many men had come ; he had a sleeping bag and a travelling chest, and took his place on the fore-deck. A little later the king came on to the quay,

and a company of men with him. Sturla rose and bowed, and bade the king "hail," but the king answered nothing, and went aft along the ship to the quarter-deck. They sailed that day to go south along the coast. But in the evening when men unpacked their provisions Sturla sat still, and no one invited him to mess. Then a servant of the king's came and asked Sturla if he had any meat and drink. Sturla said "No." Then the king's servant went to the king and spoke with him, out of hearing : and then went forward to Sturla and said : " You shall go to mess with Thorir Mouth and Erlend Maw." They took him into their mess, but rather stiffly. When men were turning in to sleep, a sailor of the king's asked who should tell them stories. There was little answer. Then said he : " Sturla the Iclander will you tell stories ? " " As you will," said Sturla. So he told them the story of Huld, better and fuller than any one there had ever heard it told before. Then many men pushed forward to the fore-deck, wanting to hear as clearly as might be, and there was a great crowd. The queen asked : " What is that crowd on deck there ? " A man answered : " The men are listening to the story that the Iclander tells." " What story is that ? " said she. He answers : " It is about a great troll-wife, and it is a good story and well told." The king bade her pay no heed to that, and go to sleep. She says, " I think this Iclander must be a good fellow, and less to blame than he is reported." The king was silent.

So the night passed, and the next morning there was no wind for them, and the king's ship lay in the same place. Later in the day, when men sat at their drink, the king sent dishes from his table to Sturla. Sturla's messmates were pleased with this : " You bring better

luck than we thought, if this sort of thing goes on." After dinner the queen sent for Sturla and asked him to come to her and bring the troll-wife story along with him. So Sturla went aft to the quarter-deck, and greeted the king and queen. The king answered little, the queen well and cheerfully. She asked him to tell the same story he had told overnight. He did so, for a great part of the day. When he had finished the queen thanked him, and many others besides, and made him out in their minds to be a learned man and sensible. But the king said nothing ; only he smiled a little. Sturla thought he saw that the king's whole frame of mind was brighter than the day before. So he said to the king that he had made a poem about him, and another about his father : " I would gladly get a hearing for them." The queen said : " Let him recite his poem ; I am told that he is the best of poets, and his poem will be excellent." The king bade him say on, if he would, and repeat the poem he professed to have made about him. Sturla chanted it to the end. The queen said : " To my mind that is a good poem." The king said to her : " Can you follow the poem clearly ? " " I would be fain to have you think so, sir," said the queen. The king said : " I have learned that Sturla is good at verses." Sturla took his leave of the king and queen and went to his place. There was no sailing for the king all that day. In the evening before he went to bed he sent for Sturla. And when he came he greeted the king and said : " What will you have me to do, sir ? " The king called for a silver goblet full of wine, and drank some and gave it to Sturla and said : " A health to a friend in wine ! " (*Vín skal til vinar drekka*). Sturla said : " God be praised for it ! " " Even so," says the king ; " and

now I wish you to say the poem you have made about my father." Sturla repeated it : and when it was finished men praised it much, and most of all the queen. The king said : " To my thinking, you are a better reciter than the Pope."—*Sturlunga Saga*, vol. ii. p. 269 *sqq.*

King Hacon never came back from his Scottish voyage ; Sturla the Icelander wrote his life. The history of the former kings of Norway had by this time come into shape ; they were read to King Hacon as he lay on his sick bed in the Orkneys, when he was too tired to follow the Latin Bible. Sturla had many good models before him, and he was already practised in historical writing. The task, however, was a new one, and *Hákonar Saga* is in many respects very different from *Sturlunga* ; chiefly owing to difference in the subject.

Norway and Iceland, in the thirteenth century, are in contrast almost as if they had been intended for a logical example, to illustrate the method of Agreement and Difference ; or for an historical demonstration, to explain the nature and functions of monarchy in the Middle Ages. The original emigration to Iceland did not drain away all the freedom out of Norway ; the Norwegians who stayed behind were not slavish and obedient people ; it was a long time before the ideas of Harald Fairhair got the better of the old modes of life. The original *Germania* still thrived in Norway in spite of the great kings, and anarchy kept returning, in ways that were quite well understood by the Norwegians themselves. Their name for it was *neskonungar*—"ness-kings"—as we speak of the Heptarchy ; in Norway in the old days there had been a number of

little independent kings each on his own headland, ruling his own stretch of a fiord. By the year 1200 a new monarchical experiment had succeeded under Sverre, one of the most remarkable adventurers who have ever come forward as Saviours of Society. He had a ragged regiment, the *Birkibeinar*, or Birchlegs, as they were nicknamed from their birch-bark gaiters—a company like that of David—every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented. These *Birkibeinar* for a long time were a terror to the country; a bad report of them was brought to England in the reign of Henry II. by the Norwegian Archbishop Eystein, and their nickname is found in English history and even in English popular poetry (*Havelok the Dane*). But their leader Sverre was not merely a captain of bandits. He had ideas and he carried them out. He was one of Carlyle's heroes, though unfortunately Carlyle was old and tired before he came to him in his notes on the kings of Norway, and could not tell the history of Sverre in full. He was a good talker, and used to speak straight to his *Birkibeinar* about their faults, and give them the whole duty of man in simple moral tales. He drilled his own army, and with them he drilled the country, "making the peace" there effectively, so that a time came when the *Birkibeinar* were received as benefactors, and the power of King Sverre was established and made legitimate.

The difficulty about Carlyle's heroes is to know what is going to happen when the hero dies. After Sverre's death in 1202 the old games began again—faction fights as ruinous as those of Iceland. The difference between the two countries was that in Norway there was always a semblance of a principle to fight about;

which did not make things any more comfortable for Norway.

As a specimen, there is the fight in Trondhjem, at the end of April, 1206.

Ingi, the Birkibein king (Sverre's nephew), was in Trondhjem at his sister's wedding. The other faction, the Crosiers (*Baglar*)—"bloated Aristocracy," as Carlyle called them—had been sailing for three weeks from Tunsberg in the south, round the Ness and up the west coast, meaning to attack ; news of this was sent to the king from Bergen, but it did not interrupt the feast. Orders were given to the king's guard to set a proper watch round the hall at night, but when the time came the bridegroom said it would be a pity to spoil the entertainment for the king's men. He, the bridegroom, would send some of his own people to the shore, at the mouth of the river, to keep a look out ; and that would do well enough. The king assented, and the drinking went on far into the night. The bridegroom kept his promise and sent out his men, but they talked it over among themselves and said they would not keep watch for the king's men and the country squires ; they would go to bed.

It was a dark sleety morning when the enemy came to Trondhjem ; they rowed up to the land and held their oars and listened, and found everything quiet in the town : they put some men ashore to go scouting up to the king's house, who came back and reported that no one was stirring anywhere. Then they blew their trumpets and fell on the town.

The king slept hard, and was very slow to waken when the alarm came, and asked what the matter was. However, he got up and climbed from the balcony to the roof and lay there till the Crosiers had gone past

along the street. Then he went down Chapman Street to the river, and jumped in and swam to a merchant ship that was lying moored there, and caught hold of the cable and tried to climb on board. A man came to the bow and told him to let go the rope and remove himself. The king hung on and said nothing. Then the man took a boat-hook and pushed him off, and the king had to swim across the river, and a number of his men also. On the other side he fell down numb with cold ; it was sleeting hard. One of his men, Ivar, came out of the river, and the king called on him to help him ; but he said, " I must help myself first." Shortly after another came, Reidulf, and said : " Are you here, my lord ? " (*eru þér hér, herra*). The king said : " So you called me yesterday." Reidulf said : " So art thou still, and so shalt thou be, while we are alive, the two of us." Then he took off his mantle and packed the king in it on his back, and brought him safe away.

A story is told here in one of the versions of this which is significant, whether it is true or not.

A " Bagling "—one of the Crosier party—chased a Birkibein along the street ; the Birkibein tried to get to the church for safety. At the church corner he was cut down, and then the pursuer saw that he had killed his brother.

It reminds one of the formal scene in Henry VI.—" enter, a Son who has killed his Father," " enter, a Father who has killed his son "—where the moral of the faction fights is expounded by King Henry as a sort of chorus.

Reading this story and others like it from the early part of the thirteenth century, one thinks of the country as fallen back into helpless misgovernment—gluttony, sloth, and selfishness, with flashes of energy through it,

but all too undisciplined to do any good. What actually happened was better than expectation, to use an Icelandic way of speaking. The ideas of King Sverre and the results of his drill lived on, and that is what the life of Hacon has to show. The child Hacon was taken up by the Birkibeinar, the Old Guard of King Sverre, men with one idea, who would do anything for their cause, *i.e.* the right line of the kings of Norway, which Sverre had taught them to recognise as being the same thing as the Law of St. Olaf. In Sverre's contest with the Bishops and their allies he had made the Law of St. Olaf into a sort of watchword and emblem for his men, and Hacon, Sverre's grandson, was the king for them, the king whom the Law of St. Olaf required. Sverre had taken much trouble over the rights of the question. Against the new law which the Bishops had tried to establish in 1164, which would have made the king vassal of the Church, Sverre had drawn up a full statement, one of the clearest and most interesting of political arguments, which asserts the Divine Right of Kings apart from any ecclesiastical interference, and proves it against the Churchmen by citations from the Canon Law. The old Birkibeins did not trouble themselves much about the science of politics, but their watchword, the Law of St. Olaf, meant in practice what Sverre had meant both in practice and in theory. The good fortune of the young Hacon was that he grew up among the veterans into a full comprehension of the ideas of Sverre. So that in this case, at any rate, the Carlylean ideal is not refuted by the death of the champion, or by the collapse of all his work under some foolish Ishbosheth of a successor. It looked like that, it is true, for some years after the death of Sverre—it looked as if the deluge had come back. But this was

prevented by the fixed idea of the old partisans, and by the education of Hacon ; all which is clearly brought out in Sturla's biography.

There are two Norwegian essays on Monarchy which may very fairly be contrasted with Sturla's Icelandic portrait of a king of Norway. They are both didactic : one is Sverre's treatise, already mentioned ; the other is the *Speculum Regale*, or King's Mirror (*Konungs Skuggsjá*), written in the ordinary conventional form of a dialogue between a father and son, but very original and lively in its matter. The father is a king's man, as he calls himself, and among many other things he tells his views about the nature of a king and the manners of a Court : how one should demean himself in the presence of the king. For instance, if the king is sitting at table when you are admitted, you must stand at the proper distance and leave room for the waiters. You should hold your left wrist in your right hand, and be careful to listen to what the king says. If it happens that you don't catch his words exactly, you must not say " Ha ! " or " What ! " but " Sir ! " or, if you wish to put it more fully : " Let it not be displeasing, sir, if I ask what you spoke to me, for I understood not clearly."

The difference between the Icelandic biography and the more abstract Norwegian works is, in a way, characteristic of the two countries, though we need not make too much of it.

Sturla's Life of Hacon will bear comparison with other historians of the time—with Matthew Paris, for example, who was a friend of King Hacon. It has been blamed as too courtly, but other witnesses (Matthew Paris among them) take a similar view of the king ; Hacon's energy and success can be proved indepen-

dently of the Icelandic historian. Naturally, the book is not as lively as the family memoirs of Sturla ; he had not lived through it in the same way. But he had plenty of information from old Birkibein traditions, and he was a practised sifter of evidence. There is not the same room for comedy as in the Icelandic books, but there are "humours and observations"—*e.g.* in the account of the coronation ceremony and the emotion of the Scottish knight, Mitchell, who was so overcome by the splendour that he sobbed aloud—or, again, in the notes of Cardinal William's journey in 1247, and his uncertainty whether there would be anything in Norway fit for a gentleman to drink. It is pleasant to compare this with Matthew Paris on the same subject. He had made a special study of Papal legates and their ways, and describes with gusto the expensive fitting-out of the Cardinal's ship, with all its store-rooms and cabins, richly furnished, "like another Ark of Noah."

Sturla luckily came to Norway in time to collect the reminiscences of the veterans. He does not tell us what Froissart would have told about the people and the places where he got his information ; by the rules of Icelandic history the author is not allowed to talk about himself except where he comes definitely into the action. But Sturla makes as good use as Froissart could have made of the memories of older men, and the Life of Hacon contains a number of good stories. The childhood and the youth of Hacon are well told, from the time when the Birkibeinar took the infant and carried him across Norway over the snow. They were very fond of him and remembered his wise sayings : as when once, in winter time, the butter was frozen so hard that it could not be spread ; the bread, on the other hand, was elastic, so the little Hacon (four years

old) folded it round the butter, saying, "Let us bind the butter, Birkibeinar." At which they laughed enormously and went about repeating it. It is not quite as good as some of the early wisdom of King James VI. ("There is a hole in this Parliament"), but the history is all the better for this and other like things. The Icelandic author himself does not care too precisely for the dignity of history, and the oral tradition preserved some things that a mere Court-historian might have left out: a rude speech of King Hacon to his trumpeter was remembered. The trumpeter's blowing was feeble, and the king spoke to him like one of Marryat's boatswains, and said: "Why can't you blow? You blew better when you were playing for money on the quay at Bergen."

Again, the critical talent of the Icelanders did not prevent them from putting miraculous things into their histories; the Sturlung memoirs are full of dreams and portents, including a dream of Sturla himself, about a mighty stone shoot, a rushing "scree," in the valley of Hvamm, just before the great defeat of the Sturlungs. There are some stories of that sort also in the Life of Hacon—best of all, the vision that appeared to King Alexander of Scotland as he lay at anchor in the Sound of Kerrera, when St. Olaf, St. Magnus, and St. Columba appeared and warned him. This, again, is told in the Icelandic way; the three men are described first, before their names are given, and their names are given as conjectures. A thick-set figure wearing the dress of a king—who could this be but St. Olaf? The third figure, who was much the tallest of the three, is described as "bald on the forehead" (*mjök framsnoðinn*), which must mean the Irish tonsure of St. Columba—the frontal tonsure—a curiously accurate piece of detail.

The Icelandic method is like that of a novelist : their best books are the history of families and neighbourhoods, " annals of the parish." The interests are those of private life. Hence Sturla had to change his manner somewhat in dealing with the larger political affairs of Norway. There is a different scale and other motives. Sturla does something to bring out his conception of the kingly office ; as in the chapter which he gives to a well-filled day of King Hacon's life, in the Christmas time of his most anxious year, when the king had to attend the funeral of one of his lords, and also to look after the launch of a warship, besides hearing cases and holding a court. No time was lost ; the mast of the warship was stepped while the funeral service was being sung ; " the king was busy that day."

And further, while he thus exhibits the practical genius of the king, Sturla does not neglect the more showy part of his government—as in the coronation that so impressed the Scottish knight. The correspondence with the Emperor Frederick and King Lewis of France, with King James of Aragon, the Conqueror, and King Alfonso of Castile, the Wise, not to speak of the Sultan of Tunis—all this takes one far from the dales of Iceland. The King of Norway belonged to the great world, and to the new fashions. There was some vanity in his ambition—in his Icelandic policy, in his annexation of all Greenland, " North to the loadstar," and in his last enterprise, the voyage to Scotland. But we may still believe that Sturla was right in his view of the king, as a hard-working man and a successful peace-maker.

Far beyond all the separate notable things in the book is the conduct of that story which Ibsen has taken for his drama *Kongsemnerne*. It is in the relation of

Hacon to his father-in-law Duke Skuli that the two different principles—the monarchy and the oligarchy—are dramatised ; and Sturla fully understands this, the tragic opposition of two sorts of good intentions ; with the pathos, also, brought out in one memorable chapter, of the queen Margaret in her choice between her father, Skuli, and her husband the king. But it is impossible to say more of this here, except that the grace and dignity of it, in Sturla's history, the honours paid to the beaten side, make us understand the character of Sturla himself, better than anything else in his writings. He is described by the anonymous first editor of *Sturlunga* (about the year 1300, probably) as "a man to our knowledge most wise and fair-minded." His writings are proof that this friendly opinion is to be trusted ; and with that we may leave him.

XXXI

JÓN ARASON

THE glory of Iceland is lost at the death of Sturla the historian. This was not the very end of the great Icelandic work of prose history in the mother tongue, but the old spirit is gone ; the true imaginative rendering of Icelandic and Norwegian life, the art of Snorri and Sturla, disappears at the union of Iceland and Norway. The decadence of Iceland is manifest in the failure of the great historic school ; the decadence of Norway also, when there were no more lives of kings written by Icelanders in the common language.

But the dull times of Iceland, after the thirteenth century, ought not to be made out worse than they really were. Iceland ran through its good seasons and its fortune ; but it never lost its distinctive character. It lost much ; but it kept that pride and self-respect which is proved in the history of the language, and which saved Iceland from the fate of Norway, the degradation and disuse of the native tongue. Historians sometimes speak as if the condition of Norway and Iceland through the bad centuries were much the same. No doubt there is a great resemblance. Both countries are altered for the worse through their

relations with Denmark ; both turn into dependencies. But even though Iceland often received harder treatment than Norway, as happened under the tyranny of the Danish trade, Iceland never gave way in spirit as Norway did. The Icelanders kept their language and their art of poetry. They were saved by their good grammar from the Norwegian lethargy. They maintained their self-consciousness over against the rest of the world ; a small community, not as large as Athens or Hampstead. Through the vicissitudes of a thousand years the Icelanders have not changed their minds with regard to the use of their minds ; at any rate they have continued to believe that they were meant to live as intelligent beings. Also, from the conditions of their land and society, as well as from their own native disposition, they pay more attention to individual men than is common in other countries. This habit of thought, which is the source of the great historical art of Iceland, is not lost when the historical school is closed. The history of the Reformation in Iceland, and the life of Jón Arason, Bishop of Hólar, may show how little the essentials have changed in three hundred years from the time of the Sturlungs. It is true that the life of Bishop Jón is not written out full and fair like the life of Bishop Gudmund, three hundred years before. But the scattered notes and memoirs from which the story can be put together were made by Icelanders who had the same tastes, though not the same ability, as the earlier historians. Snorri and Sturla must have worked with similar notes, in preparation for their finished work. The records of the time of Jón Arason show that there was the same sort of interest in character and adventures as there was when the Sturlung memoirs were composed.

The history of the Reformation in Iceland is a drama of persons more than in other countries. The persons, it is true, cannot be compared for dignity, and hardly for richness of humour, with the principal authors and adversaries of the Reformation, with Luther or Knox, Henry VIII., or the Emperor Charles. But in Iceland, unlike the rest of Christendom, there is very little to be told that is not obviously dramatic ; the dramatic, the personal values, are not obscured by general impersonal forces and movements ; the stage is compact and comprehensible. With earlier affairs in Iceland, with the matter of the sagas, it is often amusing and surprising to find how readily historical events seem to fall into their place like things in a novel. One gets the same impression in the history of Jón Arason, even although the action was never fully represented in the old Icelandic narrative way. The chief situations are intelligible and clear, just as they might be in a novel or a comedy. If one could imagine a chronicle of Barset, with the Reformation for its substance, instead of, *e.g.*, the problem of Hiram's Hospital, one might get something like the Icelandic scale and mode as observed in the life of Bishop Jón of Hólar. It is tempting, though irrelevant, to consider how the Barchester characters might have displayed themselves if they had been transported to the Icelandic scene ; to think of Dean Arabin drawn into a raiding expedition by Archdeacon Grantly, against his better judgment, yet not unwilling ; of Mrs. Proudie talking manfully and evangelically to the invaders, while Mark Robarts and Bertie Stanhope were packing up the Bishop to carry him away. How the Slopes and Thumbles would have behaved there is no need to imagine, for the Icelandic record has preserved their ancestors undecayed and unmistak-

able. One of them did his best to edify Jón Arason on the way to the headsman's block.

"When Bishop Jón was led out, there was a certain priest, Sir Svein, appointed to speak to him persuasively. The bishop, as he came forth from the choir, sought to do obeisance before an image of Mary ; but the priest bade him lay aside that superstition, and said (among other comforting words) : "There is a life after this life, my lord !" But Bishop Jón turned sharply and said, "I know that, Sveinki !" (*Biskupa Sögur*, ii. p. 353.)

Political novels and plays are apt to fail through overweight of political argument, or else, at the opposite extreme, because they make things too obviously superficial, too simple and easy. In Björnson's political plays the questions often seem too trivial, the politicians not really dangerous. In Icelandic history the casual reader may often think that the interests are trifling, the values unduly heightened by chroniclers who do not know the world. The documents often confirm this view. There are extant from Jón Arason's time claims for damages suffered in certain raids which take up a considerable space in Icelandic history ; a householder feels the loss, among other things, of a peppermill and a mustard-mill, and that is recorded. The great men, prelates and chiefs of Iceland, may seem on examination very much like the common people of the English border. "There are a thousand such elsewhere" in Liddesdale, Redesdale, and the Debatable Land. Kinmont Willie and the Laird's Wat might have been princes in Iceland. The great men of Iceland, are they not great through the emptiness of the region round them, the simplicity and inexperience of their countrymen ? So one is tempted to ask, and

this sort of scepticism and depreciation leads of course to such ignoring of Iceland as is shown in the histories of Europe generally.¹

This low opinion may be contradicted and proved unreasonable. Do not casual readers speak of the history of Attica in much the same way and with not much more consideration? ² But it cannot be denied that the material weight of Iceland is small, that the greatest men are not rich men, that the interests are to all appearance domestic or parochial when compared with the fortunes of larger states.

There are at least two modes of defence in answer to this. Material interests may be unimportant where a principle or idea is at work. Thus, returning to Barchester, we observe that the historian Trollope, in *The Warden*, has made the case of Hiram's Hospital into a parable or allegory containing the whole of politics and the quintessence of public opinion. The argument of *The Warden* does not require a larger scale or a higher stake, any more than Euclid would be helped if you offered him triangles of gold and silver. There is sometimes this kind of moral in Icelandic history. Indeed, this seems to be the peculiar office of Iceland among other nations. Iceland, again and again, is found to resemble an experimental table arranged by Destiny to work out certain political problems neatly, with not too many pieces in the game. So Iceland has been made to declare the true nature of early German civilisation; so the life of Bishop Gudmund is a dramatic conflict of High Church zeal with steady

¹ *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. x. index, "Iceland, constitution for, 694": text p. 694, "Iceland received a Constitution."

² It is a pleasure here to remember Sir George Trevelyan's translation of Thucydides into the terms of Stirlingshire and Clackmannan.

respectable worldly tradition, and represents in a personal story the contemporary life of Christendom. So in the life of Jón Arason the Reformation is exhibited as a dramatic opposition of characters.

But, taking the second mode of answer to those who depreciate and ignore, we may observe that the history of Iceland is not purely ideal or exemplary ; it is itself part of the history of Europe and contributes its own share of reality to the actual world. The life of Jón Arason may illustrate the course of the Reformation in Denmark and Norway, but it is also different from anything in those countries, and has much in it that was lacking there—particularly some fortitude in opposition to the new doctrines and their advocates. The value of Jón Arason is not merely that his story brings out some common humanities and some common fashions of the time ; he is part of the life of Christendom as far as Allhallowtide of the year 1550, and what he does is done by no one else in Iceland, Norway, or Denmark.

The Church in Iceland was not very well taken care of in the fifteenth century. The bishops were mostly foreigners ; of many of them, including at least one Englishman, very little is known. One Bishop of Skalholt, described as Confessor of the King of Denmark, discovered that there was nothing to drink in Iceland except milk and water ; therefore he made provision and obtained from Henry VI. of England a licence for two ship-captains to sail to Iceland with supplies. Before him in the same diocese there was a tyrannical Swedish bishop who had thirty unruly Irishmen in his retinue ; he was at last (in accordance with the popular will) tied up in a sack and drowned in Brúará. Which, however, was not the last of him, for in the very familiar manner of ghosts in Iceland, he “ came again ”

(of course as a solid body), and gave some trouble before he would lie quiet (1433).

It would have been a great misfortune for Iceland if the Reformation had come when there were no better Churchmen in the cathedrals than this Swedish bishop or the Danish royal chaplain who was so careful about his beer. But, as it fell out, the great debate was not left to be determined in Iceland by wholly external powers, by Luther or the King of Denmark. Some Icelanders very early began to think for themselves in a Lutheran way; and on the other side was Jón Arason.

It is one of the fortunate things and one of the strange things in Icelandic history that at the time of the Reformation the bishop in the North was one of the greatest men of the time, and a man who recalled the greatness of the old days. Jón Arason, Bishop of Hólar, was not like his predecessor, Bishop Gudmond, a great Churchman with a consistent theory of the relations between Church and laity. But he was a churchman of another old Icelandic sort, a great chieftain, a married man with a family, fond of power and wealth and glory, very closely resembling the great men of the Sturlung Age. It was as if Kolbein Tumason or Sturla Sighvatsson had come back to life in Holy Orders. And this great man was not simply a worldly potentate with the dignity of a bishop; he was the chief poet of his time, and his poems were religious. He does not represent any theory of the relations between Church and State: he is not the successor of Thomas à Becket, or of St. Thorlac. But he represents better than anyone else the Church of Iceland as it was for centuries from the time of the first conversion—the rather easy-going but wholesome religion which in so many ways resembles the Church of England.

Jón Arason's poetry cannot be explained except to those who understand it already. Like all Icelandic poetry, its beauty is largely a beauty of form, and of the form it may be said that Jón Arason is a master of rhyming stanzas, apparently without much or any suggestion from foreign literature. He worked on the principles of Icelandic rhyming poetry, derived from the Latin rhyming poetry of the Middle Ages, and used those principles so as to make very beautiful stanzas in which the artifice is not so great as to hinder the freedom of expression. One of his poems has had a strange fortune. It was very early taken up by the Faroese, and was used by them at sea for the good of their fishery—"whale-verse" being a popular name for it.¹

The Reformation was established in Denmark by King Christian III., in his ordinance of 1538, which prescribed everything to the kingdom and the Church,

¹ The Faroese version was edited in *Aarb. Oldk.*, 1869, pp. 311-338, by R. Jensen.

The first stanza is the proper "hvalvers," and the note on it is as follows:

"This is what Lyngby quotes in the appendix to his Faroese ballads, the so-called 'whale-verse,' the only fragment of the poem which can be said to be generally known. The name comes from the belief that the singing of it had power to drive away the large whales, if there was danger from them to fishing-boats at sea (hvis man kom i hvalnød ude paa havet)."

Miss Elizabeth Taylor, who has a close acquaintance with life in the Faroes, points out that the virtue of the "whale-verse" comes from a popular rendering of *kvölum* (= pains of hell) as *hvölum* (= whales; pronounced in the same way as the other word). The "whale-verse" is thus given, *loc. cit.*—*Ljómur Biskups Jóns Arasonar*.

Hægstur heilagur andi
himna kongurinn sterki
lovliga lít tu á meg,
signauður á sjogv og landi
sannur í vilja og verki
hoyr tú, eg heiti á teg!
Forða tú mær fjandans þínu og díki,
feikna kvölum öllum frá mær víki,
mær veit tú tað, Mariu sonurin ríki,
mæla eg kundi nakað, svá tær líki!

the king being himself the head. The name of "bishop" was disused, though the office was kept. Under the ordinance the king appointed "superintendents" for the various dioceses. These "superintendents" are the Protestant Lutheran bishops, and it may be observed that Bishop Gizur, the Protestant bishop of Skalholt, calls himself "superintendens," though in Iceland the authority and name of "bishop" were too respectable to be supplanted by this new government description.

The ordinance was imposed without difficulty in Denmark: the king was thinking of Denmark, and not particularly of Norway or Iceland, when the ordinance was granted. But Christian III. of Denmark held himself to be King of Norway also. There was some resistance to him, both to his title and his policy there; Norway, however, had no real strength, and it is here that the difference in spirit between Norway and Iceland comes out most clearly. To the Catholic Archbishop, Olaf Engelbrektsson, in Norway, the Reformation was loathsome, and there seems to have been little regard for it among the people. But there was just as little effective liking for the old Church, and the Archbishop of Nidaros could make no party of his own out of the Catholics of Norway. He had to leave the country, unheroically though not dishonourably (April, 1537), and the kingdom of Norway accepted the ordinance, keeping all its sympathies still for the old faith, and taking no interest in the teaching of Luther.

The Lutheran ordinance of King Christian III. was imposed on Iceland also. It cannot be said that the people of Iceland showed themselves much more awake than the people of Norway to the meaning of the change, but there is a great difference between the two countries. Iceland being a small country as compared

with Norway is much more easily affected by the talent of any one of its members. New ideas run more easily over the land, and it happened that in Iceland both sides were much better represented than in Norway. The Protestant Reformation in Iceland was not merely a Lutheran ordinance imposed by a king. Although there was much dissatisfaction with the change, it cannot be said that the Reformation in Iceland was carried through without the general consent of the people. Icelandic history brings out very clearly the same unpleasant interests, particularly the appetite for church lands, as may be found in the history of the Reformation in other countries. But there was also very early a movement for the translation of the Scriptures, and afterwards the honour of the Reformation was maintained in Iceland by the great translator, Bishop Gudbrand.

Jón Arason was born in 1484 ; little is told of his early life. His father died, and Jón acted as steward for his mother at Laugaland (near Akreyri) till he was twenty-four. Then he took Holy Orders, and shortly afterwards was married in some form or other to his wife Helga : a contract recognised by Icelandic tradition, and not apparently at any time challenged on any ground either by Catholics or Protestants. He made two voyages to Norway for Bishop Gottskalk of Hólar, and after the death of Gottskalk (1520) was elected bishop himself (1522) by all the priests with one dissident.

At that time Bishop Ogmund, of Skalholt, had just been consecrated, a man in some things resembling Jón Arason, and very well fitted to be his rival or his friend. At first he was a decided enemy. It is curious how just before the Reformation—the “change of fashion”

(siðaskipti), as it is called in Icelandic—there should have been, after so many foreign bishops, a return to the old natural conditions, with two men in the two cathedrals so thoroughly like their ancestors. Ogmund was a tall stout gentleman, with a remarkable talent for strong language and little regard for his personal appearance, though much for his episcopal dignity and power. He was indeed a chieftain of the old school like Jón Arason, but without his wit and poetry. He tried at first to keep Jón Arason out of the bishopric of Hólar; he and Jón met once in the old fashion at the Althing, each with his tail of fighting men, and there was likelihood of a battle. But peace was made by the intervention of the abbots and other clergy, and there was no more trouble of that kind.¹

The contention between the bishops is told with some detail, and evidently with much enjoyment of the old-fashioned tricks and stratagems. In that respect there was little change after five centuries.

Generally the two bishops behaved like heroes of the older sagas, and made their fortunes in the old way—by authority, maintenance, ingenious use of the law. There is material for the history of a law case in which Jón was concerned;² the facts resemble those of the Sturlung time. He thinks of his sons in the same way as Sighvat Sturluson might; the true meaning of heredity is proved when his son Ari is made Lawman. At the same time (in this also like the Sturlung house) he attends to the liberal arts; to his own poetry especially. He had no reputation for scholarship; it was a common

¹ Jón Egilson has a curious story of a wager of battle in the old place—the island in Oxará—between champions of the bishops. See Dict. s.v. *hólmanga*.

² *Biskupa Sögur*, ii. p. 430 sqq.

belief that he knew no Latin. The Reformation, it should be remembered, encouraged the growth of classical learning in Iceland; the standard was raised after Bishop Jón's time. An interesting document is the Latin account of him written by a Protestant, about 1600, pitying Jón for the want of proper Latin education in his youth. *Adeo miserum est infelici tempore natum esse*. This author recognises very fully the native genius of Jón Arason and his accomplishment in Icelandic verse.

It is not quite easy to make out the extent of his learning. He was undoubtedly fond of books, and the first printer in Iceland, Síra Jón Matthiasson the Swede, worked under his patronage.¹ The Reformers did much for the encouragement of study, but they had not to begin at the very beginning.

Jón Arason does not appear very definitely in the earlier stages of the Reformation in Iceland.

The Reformation touched the southern diocese first; the south was more exposed to innovation, as the Danish government house was at Bessastad; and Bishop Ogmund of Skalholt had to meet the impinging forces alone. His tragedy is represented with some liveliness in the extant narratives.

The time is 1539-1541; the chief personages are Bishop Ogmund; his Protestant successor, Gizur Einarsson; Didrik van Minden, a man from Hamburg, deputy of the Governor Claus van Marwitz; Christopher Hvítfeldt, a Danish commissioner with a ship of war. The chief witnesses, besides original letters and other documents, are Síra Einar, a priest who was faithful to the bishop, and his son Egil, then about seventeen years old. Egil was alive, aged seventy, in 1593, when one

¹ *Biskupa Sögur*, ii. p. 440 sqq.

of the narratives was written (*Bs.* ii. 237-259). Another is the work of his son Jón, parson at Hrepphólar in Arnessýsla about 1600.¹

Bishop Ogmund was old and blind when the "change of manners" befell. He was riding with his attendants one sunny day when his sight went from him. He asked and was told that the sun was shining bright; then he said: "Farewell, world! long enough hast thou served me!"

He had to find an assistant and successor; first he chose his sister's son Sigmund, but Sigmund died in Norway not twenty days after his consecration (1537).²

Then Bishop Ogmund, with the assent of the clergy, chose Gizur Einarsson to succeed him. This was the first Protestant bishop in Iceland, and if he was not an absolute sneak, the witnesses (including himself) have done him great wrong. Bishop Ogmund was his patron from very early days, and Gizur made good use of his opportunities. He was a very able man, and the bishop was right in thinking so. It is hard to discover how much the bishop knew about Gizur's Protestant sympathies. There is no reason to doubt that Gizur was an earnest reformer. Like other men of the time, he had unpleasant ways of mixing his own profit with evangelical religion, but he seems to have obtained his religious principles through study, and

¹ *Biskupa Annðlar Jóns Egilssonar*, edited by Jón Sigurdsson in *Safn til Sögu Islands*, i. 29-117.

² *Bs.* ii. p. 269. Sigmund's daughter Katrín was wife of Egil above-mentioned, and mother of Síra Jón who wrote the Bishops' Annals. She was a child of nine, staying with her grandmother at Hjalli when her grand-uncle, Bishop Ogmund, was arrested by the Danes in 1541. She was keeping the bishop's feet warm that morning, and saw what happened. Cf. Jón Egilsson, p. 73. *Hinir . . . kómu til Hjalla fyrir dagmál, og tóku þar biskupinn í baðstofunni; móðir mín lá á fótum hans og var nú vetra; þeir leiddu hann út, etc.*

not in a casual or superficial manner. He was associated with Odd Gottskalksson, the translator, and with other young Icelandic students who came under the influence of Luther.

In 1539 Gizur sailed for Denmark as Bishop-elect of Skalholt; and that same year the Reformation displayed itself in a Danish attack on the island of Videy at Reykjavík, and in spoliation of the monastery there. The agent in this was Didrik van Minden; fourteen men in an eight-oared boat were enough for the business. It seems a paltry thing, but, as usual, one must remember the Icelandic scale; the ruin of Videy was no less for Iceland than the ruin of the Charterhouse was for London. In Iceland the retribution was not slow. At the Althing, a few weeks later, all the Danes who had attacked the cloister were outlawed and their lives forfeited. The Danes made very little of the Althing and its sentence, but here they were wrong. In August Didrik and his men went to Skalholt to bully the old bishop, meaning to go further east and break up the great cloisters of Thykkvabæ and Kirkjubæ. Didrik blustered in his bad language, bawling at the "divelz blindi biskup," but that was the end of him. The country-side rose; as he sat in the bishop's parlour he looked out of the window and asked, "What is the meaning of all those hælbarðs?" The meaning was that the avengers had come for him; he had to fight for his life; the man who killed him told Jón Egilsson all about it (*op. cit.*, p. 70). This happened on St. Lawrence's Day, August 10th, 1539. It was followed by strong political action on the part of the Althing. Iceland was roused; not only were Didrik and his men convicted after execution and declared outlaws (*óþóttamenn*), but a strong and clear description of Claus van

Marwitz, the governor, his robberies and forgeries was sent from the Althing, 1540, to the king, with a petition for his removal and for the appointment of no one "who does not know or keep the law of the land, and is not of Danish tongue."¹ The previous summer, after the death of Didrik, arrangements had been made for carrying on the government business through the sheriffs, without the governor. The Icelandic case was upheld in Denmark; Claus van Marwitz was sentenced by King and Council in 1542 to imprisonment for life. He was released the year after.

So far the people of Iceland were victorious; Iceland had never spoken more clearly or with better rights as a single community. But Bishop Ogmund had to meet a greater danger than the violence of Didrik and the other ruffians. His coadjutor, Gizur, then in Denmark, is said to have persuaded the king that Ogmund stood in the way of the Gospel. In the spring of 1541 he came out in a man-of-war, with Christopher Hvitfeldt, the commissioner, and set himself busily to collect as much as possible of Bishop Ogmund's goods. The story is pretty fully told from the report of eyewitnesses, and there is a letter of Gizur himself which shows how far any witness was from exaggerating.

Bishop Ogmund was staying with his sister at Hjalli when the Danes came upon him. They roused him from his bed, and took him out to the courtyard in his long nightgown, but allowed him after that to put his clothes on; then they collected as much as they could of his silver. His sister, Asdis, tried to keep hold of

¹ "Danish tongue" does not mean Danish; it is the old name for the old Norse language. The ambiguity may have been calculated so as not to offend the king. The Icelanders address the king as King of Norway and acknowledge the laws of Norway, not of Denmark.

him, but they pulled her away, put the old bishop on a horse and brought him off to the ship. How the bishop's silver was taken is told particularly on very good authority. The bishop promised to give up his silver, and sent for the priest Einar to fetch it. Einar (whose son Egil tells the story) went to see the bishop on board the ship, got his letter and seal as warrant, and then started for Hjalli along with six Danes and Egil, his son. Asdis gave them the keys of the money chest, and they swept everything into a sack, dollars, nobles, Rhenish guldens, cups and pots and all, so that there was not a single "lübeck" left. They took even the rims of the drinking horns. Asdis claimed a brooch as her own, and it was given up to her. But the bishop was not released. They repented about the brooch, and said they must have it too; and the bishop sent a letter to his sister, and the Danes took the letter, and brought the brooch away. But the bishop was not allowed to land again; he was taken to Denmark, and died there. King Christian was not well pleased at the work of his servants.

Jón Egilsson, whose father and mother, Egil and Katrin, both saw something of this affair, was told by his grandfather, Einar, of a letter, written by someone to the Commissioner, "not to let the old fox go"; at which Christopher Hvitfeldt shook his head, apparently not liking the style of his correspondent. The letter is extant, and the writer was the new Bishop Gizur. It is worth quoting in full, as a document of the Reformation.¹ It appears that to do things thoroughly Gizur had gone with Claus van Marwitz (who had not yet been recalled) to another house of Ogmund's in Hankadal to make a search there. The

¹ Printed in *Safn.*, i. 128.

letter is written in Low German, which may thus be translated :

“ IHS. *Salutem per Christum*. I do your worship to know, good Christopher, that I have been with Claus van Marwitz in Haukadal, but there was nothing there of silver plate or any such stuff, nothing worth a mite, except one small silver cup about an ounce weight; everything had been carried off before, as the old one can tell you if he will. And there was nothing here at all of any worth, but all cleared away together, as Claus can inform you. Further, good Christopher, see to it that you do not let the fox loose on land again, now that he is safe in your keeping, for if he were to land the people might raise an uproar. It is not advisable that he should come to the Althing, since many of his adherents will be there. If possible, I will come to speak with you, three or four days before the Althing.

“ The blessing of Almighty God be with you eternally. Written in haste in Haukadal, the Eve of Whitsunday, A.D. 1541.

“ GIZURUS EINARI,

“ Superintendens Schalholt.

“ To the honourable and discreet Christopher Hvitfeldt, etc., this letter with all speed. G.”

It is pleasant to believe, on the evidence of Síra Einar, that Christopher was disgusted when he read those evangelical sentences. The author of them, it should be remembered, was the scholar who translated the Protestant ordinance of 1538 from Latin into the vernacular tongue : his version has lately appeared, together with the Latin original, in the *Diplomatarium Islandicum*.

Jón Arason, who had taken his full share in the condemnation of Claus van Marwitz, and who might have been expected to go further, was suddenly checked by the appearance of the Danish force and the removal of Bishop Ogmund. He seems to have felt that the proper course for him was to temporise, and if possible to fend off the detestable ordinance. He was on his way to the Althing when he heard of Ogmund's captivity ; he stopped at Kalmanstunga and went no further. On the 27th June he wrote forbidding all action against the diocese of Hólar, and appealing to the Council of Norway. He also wrote in bolder terms to Christopher ; sorry that he had been prevented by his friends from coming to an interview ; he was ready to accept the ordinance if it were approved by the Catholic Church and the Chapter of Nidaros. The king summoned the two Icelandic bishops to Copenhagen. Gizur went, of course ; Jón of Hólar asked to be excused, and sent three proctors, his son Sigurd, Canon of Nidaros, being one (1542). They did homage to the king, and swore to the ordinance, and returned in 1543. Jón refused to be bound by their oath. But he did not attempt any active resistance, except in so far as he went on his way neglecting the new religion ; *nusquam non more Papistico infantum confirmationes missas inferias lustrationes et dedicationes celebravit aliaque ejus farinae postliminio introducere allaboravit*, to quote the learned historian of the Church in Iceland. Jón did not quarrel openly with Gizur. The malignant may be sorry that he did not " teach " the superintendent of Skalholt, or at any rate ask him to consider it possible that he might be mistaken.

But Jón Arason must not be misunderstood through his heroic death or through his spiritual songs. He

was not a blameless heroic martyr ; he was a hero like the men of the heroic age, working with craft and policy, and sometimes with violence, and often for very worldly ends. His fall came about through his likeness to his ancestors ; he made the fortune of his family by the methods known three hundred or five hundred years earlier, and he came to ruin through a mistake about the strength of a worldly adversary. The other " big buck " (to repeat the familiar Icelandic term), Dadi Gudmundsson, won the match, and did not spare his enemy when he had got him down.

The story is as complicated as any of the feuds in *Sturlunga*. It is part of the great law case of Teit of Glaumbæ, which begins in 1523, and goes on for a century. It may be enough to say here that the bishop and his sons took the old methods of getting their own ; particulars are extant of the effect of their raids, including the loss of the pepper-mill and the mustard-mill already mentioned. The monotonous history comes to a head in the rivalry between Bishop Jón and Dadi Gudmundsson.

Dadi was one of the powerful men of the West, and has left his name in tradition. It may be taken perhaps as another proof of the Icelandic impartiality that tradition accepts with favour both the rivals, and has not made Dadi into a monster or a murderer on account of the beheading of Jón.¹

Gizur Einarsson died in the Lent of 1548. At that time Bishop Jón's spirits were high, and he was enjoying the old sport of raiding. He had let Gizur alone, for sufficient reasons. But the vacancy of the see was an opportunity not to be missed ; and when Martin, the brother-in-law of Dadi, appeared

¹ See Jón Arason, *Þjóðsögur*, ii. 121.

as the new superintendent, the temptation was irresistible.

Martin seems to have been an amiable man, without much distinction, except as a painter. He had been engaged in trade before he took Orders. He was consecrated by Palladius at Easter, 1549; having spent the winter in Copenhagen studying evangelical divinity with Dr. Hans Machabeus, *i.e.* John MacAlpine, sometime Prior of the Black Friars in Perth, now a famous Professor of Theology in Denmark. Martin seems to have been treated in rather a condescending and patronising way by the great Protestant theologians; but he got his certificate in good time.

The Protestant clergy in the diocese of Skalholt were fairly strong, and the Bishop of Hólar had not made much way there when Martin arrived. In a raid to the West, along with his two sons Síra Björn and Ari the Lawman, he picked up the new Bishop of Skalholt and Parson Arne Arnorsson, who as *officialis* of Skalholt in the vacancy had not been pliable. He hoped also to get hold of Dadi, and there was a chance of success. But warning was given in time; the story as told in one of the memoirs is not far below the level of the older sagas. It describes the evening at Stadarstad, Martin's house on the south of the Snaefell promontory. As the bishop's sons were sitting there, talking too freely about their plans, a man came in and sat near the door, no one paying him much attention, till as the dark grew on he stole away. Then he was missed; then it was asked who was the man sitting at the door saying nothing; and where had he gone? They looked for him and called; but all they saw was a man riding a good black horse hard over the moor. He was one of Dadi's men, riding the famous horse of which other

stories were told long after. Naturally, when the bishop and his sons came to Dadi's house at Snóksdal, their adversary was ready for them, and they had to be content with their clerical prisoners. Bishop Martin received a doubtful sort of hospitality during that winter ; sometimes he was a guest at table ; ¹ sometimes he was set to beat stockfish. Parson Arne was for a time penned in a place of little ease ; Bishop Jón made scoffing rhymes about him.

Arne comes into a curious passage of the memoirs of Jón Egilsson. Bishop Jón Arason had excommunicated Dadi ; it happened that Parson Arne came to Snóksdal the very day that the curse was recited at Hólar. He and Dadi Gudmundsson were together.

" Then there came so violent hiccup on Dadi that he was amazed : it was like as if the breath were going out of him. Dadi said then :

' Of me now there is word,
Where I do not sit at board.'

Arne answered : ' I will tell you how. There is word of you at Hólar because Bishop Jón is now putting you to the ban.' Dadi Gudmundsson said : ' You shall have five hundred from me if you manage so that it shall not touch me.' Arne says : ' That will I not do for any money, however much, to put myself so in pawn.' But Dadi Gudmundsson kept on beseeching him, and Arne then says that he will make the venture ' for our old acquaintance sake, but there will be a load to carry yet, I misdoubt me.' Then both of them went to the church, and Arne stayed without, and Dadi Gudmundsson went in. Arne bolted the door on him.

¹ A story told in the Annals of Björn of Skarðsá is translated C.P.B. ii. p. 387.

Then he stayed long outside, and at last he opened the door, and called Dadi Gudmundsson to come out ; and there he saw that a shaggy year-old pony was running up and down by the side of a water as if he was mad. And at last the colt plunged head-first into a hole or pool, and ended there. Arne said : ' Now, friend Dadi Gudmundsson, there you can see what was intended for you.' "

In his turn, King Christian in Copenhagen was cursing the Bishop of Hólar. (Monday after Scholastica, 1549 ; " he has treated us with disrespect, and not regarded our letters in no wise. Therefore we outlaw the said Bishop John.") And on Tuesday after the Conversion of St. Paul, 1550, the king writes to the clergy of Hólar to choose another bishop.

About the same time, the Protestant Doctor Palladius writes to Jón Arason a letter which deserves to be read for instruction in manners, hardly less than the letter of Gizur Einarsson already quoted.

Palladius says that he is ready to explain the difference between the doctrines of Christ and the Pope, if only Jón will write or signify his wishes to the Governor of Iceland. As a specimen, he offers the statement that Christ has not commanded such things as Papal consecrations, confirmations, masses and fasts. He sends the prayer of Manasses, in Danish, which Jón (if it please him) may use with weeping tears. " Send a *Suffraganeus* who may stay and winter here, and then go out to reform churches and monasteries ; *e.g.* your son Sigurd, or Sir Olaf Hjaltason."

" Put not your trust in the Pope ; he died on St. Martin's Eve († Paul III., 10 Nov., 1549). Perhaps you have already had news of that in Iceland ; *for Hecla Fell often gives intimations of that nature.*"

Bishop Jón seems to have passed the winter comfortably. His ruin came through overweening ; his son Ari (generally called the Lawman) had done his best to keep him from more raiding ; his wife Helga thought poorly of her son Ari for this, and stirred him in the old-fashioned way with the present of a woman's skirt : so that Ari went along with his father and his brother Síra Björn in the last expedition.

The scene of failure is one that has come into older history ; Saudafell, where Jón Arason and his sons were taken by Dadi Gudmundsson, had been once the house of Sturla Sighvatsson, and the raid on Saudafell by the sons of Thorvald, in January, 1229, when the master was away, is one of the memorable episodes in *Sturlunga*. It stands rather high at the mouth of a valley looking north-west over the water, towards Hvamm and other famous places, past the country of Laxdale. Snóksdal, the house of Dadi Gudmundsson, is close to it, below, and nearer to the sea. Saudafell had been one chief cause of contention between the bishop and Dadi ; both had some sort of a claim to it.

The bishop went there in September, 1550, not as a raider, but to keep an engagement and attend a court. The Lawman Orm Sturluson had been asked, and had agreed, to hold a court at Saudafell to decide the differences between the parties. Jón and his sons came to Saudafell and stayed there some days. They did not understand their enemy ; he was preparing a surprise, which was thoroughly successful. The bishop and his two sons were taken ; their followers scattered, every man his own way, except two who stood fast.

But then came perplexity for the victorious side. It was October ; nothing could be settled till the following summer. The prisoners were to be kept till the Althing.

Judgment was pronounced in a court held at Snóksdal, October 23rd, 1550. The bishop and his sons had been outlawed by the king ; the king had commanded Dadi to take them ; Christian, the deputy, was to keep them in custody at Skalholt, with the assistance of Martin, till the Althing in summer. But it was not easy to keep them safe ; the men of the North might be expected to come and rescue their bishop. They were removed to Skalholt, as the court had decided. Christian, the Governor's deputy, who had come to Snóksdal at once after the capture, was always in consultation with Dadi. Then at last someone said the inevitable word : " Let the earth keep them." Bishop Jón Arason and Björn and Ari, his sons, were beheaded at Skalholt on the Friday after Hallowmas, November 7th, 1550.

How they bore themselves was clearly remembered. It has already been told how Jón Arason answered the poor well-meaning minister who warned him against idolatry, and spoke of a future life. It was long before the Reformers gave up their unnecessary consolations ; Mary Queen of Scots had to endure the same sort of importunity.

Ari was the most regretted of the three. " I went into this game against my will, and willingly I leave it."

The bishop remembered the poor of his diocese ; he always gave away supplies in spring, and now sent a message to Hólar to take care this should not be forgotten. He also made an epigram :

What is the world ? a bitter cheat,
If Danes must sit on the judgment-seat,
When I step forth my death to meet,
And lay my head at the king's feet.

The bodies of the three were at Skalholt all winter ; in the spring of 1551 they were brought home to the North like the relics of martyrs.

Vengeance had already been taken for them, and it was Jón's daughter Thorun who set it going.

Among the men of the North who went South for the fishing that winter were some who meant to have the life of Christian, the Danish deputy. They got him at Kirkjuból, out at the end of Rosmhvalanes, and surrounded the house, wearing hoods and masks—a modern precaution. Before breaking into the house they asked and got leave from the owner : “ Yes, break away, if you pay for it after.” Christian and some other Danes were killed. It was reported that they came back from their graves, which made it necessary to dig them up and cut their heads off, with further preventive measures.

Ships of war came out, too late ; and it is notable that the commander who was sent from Denmark to bring Bishop Jón Arason before King Christian III. was the same Kristoffer Trondsson (a great sea-captain in his day) who had enabled Archbishop Olaf Engelbrektsson of Nidaros to escape from Norway to the Netherlands, in April, 1537, out of the same king's danger.

The case against Jón Arason is found in the form of a speech supposed to have been delivered by Christian, the Danish deputy, in Skalholt, the day before the beheading of the bishop and his sons. This is scarcely less remarkable than the letter of Gizur Einarsson as an historical document of the Reformation. The following is a good sample :

“ Likewise it is known to many gentlemen how Bishop John and his sons have set themselves to oppose the native people of this land, who have been at cost to

venture over sea and salt water, sailing to transact their due business before our gracious lord the King, and many of them from their long voyage and their trouble have received letters from his Majesty, some upon monasteries, some upon royal benefices, which same letters of his Majesty might no longer avail or be made effective by no means, but as soon as they came here to Iceland, Bishop John and his sons have made the King's letters null and void, and many a poor man has had his long journey for nothing and all in vain."

On the other hand, it must be observed that with the exception of some contemporary rhymes upon his death none of the records which bring out the heroic character of Jón Arason were written by Catholics. The curious impartiality of the old Icelandic historians is still found working with regard to the Protestant Reformation, and it is Lutheran opinion in Iceland that thinks of Jón Arason as a martyr.

XXXII

JACOB GRIMM

STUDENTS of language might some time consider the problem of value which offers itself when conventional words are required to express a genuine sentiment. It is one of the troubles of advancing age, that what was hackneyed in youth becomes hackneyed ever more and more: there are customary phrases prescribed for solemn occasions, and respectable speakers will repeat them and feel no discomfort, and respectable audiences will accept them as their due. But in the Philological Society, where no word is lifeless, how can the President repeat merely the ordinary formulas about the great honour done him by his election? Yet what less, or more, can he say? Less would seem churlish, and more might seem too effusive. I can only assure the Society that I am deeply sensible of the honour, and grateful to them for their generous confidence.

Naturally when one is called to fill a place of dignity and responsibility, one thinks of those who have held it before; valiant men who have gone, and who leave the encouragement of their good work to those that come after. Might I claim the auspices of Henry Sweet for my tenure of this presidential chair? I think I might; I have many proofs of his friendship; his ingenuous and humorous judgment of studies not

his own, or not peculiarly his own, has often been pleasant to me and is perpetually good to remember. I pay my homage once more to Skeat, the unwearied athlete of philology ; he carried into this business the speed of nature which gained for his unknown progenitor the significant old Danish nickname or surname of which Skeat was always rightly proud. And sitting in this siege perilous need I doubt that Furnivall would have been glad to see me here ? Glad to provide fresh duties for the President ; enjoying his troubles and always ready to share them.

I ask leave of the Society to read a short essay on one of the greatest of our ancestors, whose work I very imperfectly know and am in very few particulars competent to judge, but who has been much in my mind ever since I took to Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic ; a great example of the life of a student—Jacob Grimm, one of the men whom one comes to know personally through their writings. I may say that I have a reason of my own for thinking reverently of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, because the first written communication I ever had from Vigfússon and York Powell was the joint inscription on the copy of their Grimm Centenary pamphlet which they gave me when it appeared. I was late in making the acquaintance of Vigfússon ; I grudge the time when I might have known him, might have learned from him, and did not ; but I did know him for some years before I bade him farewell, and I have his “ G.V.” written along with “ F.Y.P.” on the little book dedicated to the memory of the brothers Grimm—in which he tells of his visit to Jacob Grimm in Berlin in 1859. I do not think I am wrong when I say that this paper is suggested by Vigfússon and York Powell and is an expression of the same

regard as they had for the scholars who showed the way.

Philology with Jacob Grimm ¹ was part of a study to which I think he gives no particular name. It was history, it was Germany, it was the Middle Ages, the Humanities, Nature, the Human Race. He began his proper work as a lawyer. The *Grammar* is dedicated to Savigny, his professor at Marburg ; in January 1805, when Grimm was twenty, Savigny called him to Paris to help him with the history of Roman Law. We may thus look on the *Deutsche Rechtsalterthümer* and the *Weisthümer* as the works of Jacob Grimm that came most naturally and directly from his early university work.

But while he practised method and clearness in the study of law, his real interests were in language and the history of literature. Savigny had his part in this also ; it was through him that the brothers Grimm made acquaintance with Arnim and Brentano ; *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* has something of Savigny in it. Jacob Grimm made his profit out of Napoleon and the new kingdom of Westphalia ; as librarian to King Jerome at Wilhelmshöhe he had the lightest of duties and plenty of time for his own reading. He wrote and published the little book on the *Meistergesang* (Göttingen, 1811 : preface dated Cassel 19th August 1810), and in this he declares his mind ; the principles of his later work may be found here. It is the summary of a literary argument that had been going on for some years, so that the work has little of improvisation in it ; it is all mature and well considered. He confesses

¹ Most of this essay was written before I read the very interesting book of M. Tonnelat, *Les frères Grimm, leur œuvre de jeunesse*, 1912. I wish to acknowledge my obligations to the author for much more than I have here borrowed from him.

that the subject is dry and difficult ; he would much rather be doing something else ; he wants to be at the epic stories, pleasant to work and rich in results. At the same time he affirms that in the history of poetry there is nothing dead or dry. He will have nothing to do with any system that makes peremptory divisions. "A receptive mind for all that lives and moves"—that, he says, is the chief requisite in all historical inquiry. Phrases like these are easily repeated and turned to canting rhetoric. One asks for "something more precise," as the Duke of Wellington asked about the Holy Alliance. Grimm has been censured, over and over again, for romantic enthusiasm. He is fond of the word "mysterious," *geheimnißvoll*. All his life he maintains the difference between *Natur-* and *Kunst-**poesie*, and often in ways that may seem to be superstitious. But in this first book of his he never forgets what he had learned in method and logic from Savigny ; and while he uses dangerous categories like "evolution," his steps of proof are all made secure with evidence. His main thesis is the continuity between *Minnesang* and *Meistergesang* ; the proofs are chiefly from the forms of verse, from the rule of triplicity in the stanza (the trefoil is engraved as an emblem on his title page), and the proofs require a number of references which do not make light reading. Carlyle could make little of it ; it is a pity he had not patience to find out what Grimm meant in his essay, for Grimm is like Carlyle, and like Burke, in his reverence for the mystery of human life—"the great mysterious incorporation of the human race"—and like them also in his attention to particular facts.

All through the treatise the modern reader is kept humble as he recognises at what disadvantages Grimm

is working and how well he does without the plentiful editions, glossaries, and literary histories which were not existent in his day ; particularly how he is compelled to leave the Provençal poetry alone for want of printed editions. It must be allowed that he is prejudiced here, and does not want to recognise any Provençal influence upon German lyric. But indeed he had not at that time the materials for judging. Modern scholars, who dabble in small patches of Grimm's garden, may often be horrified at the courage of their founder ; where he cannot find information he goes on without it. An example of this recklessness is the Middle English part of the *Grammar*, which is compiled out of Ritson's and Weber's *Romances* in the most summary and unscrupulous manner.

The *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* appeared, vol. i. in 1812, vol. ii. in 1815. This, the best known of their books, seems to have come to them almost without thinking. Folk tales could be picked up anywhere in Hesse, at their very doors. They were left to Wilhelm Grimm to comment and illustrate, while Jacob kept them in mind for his *Mythology* later. Wilhelm shared in many other works of that time ; particularly in that lone first volume of the *Elder Edda* where in translation of the old Northern poems (beginning with Völund's Lay and going down to the Death-ride of Brynhild) is shown the same skill of narrative style as in the popular tales. Jacob by himself about the same time published one of the pleasantest of all his collections, the little volume of Spanish ballads, *Silva de romances viejos*—which shows that he could occasionally wander away from his old German forests. He seems to have spent more time on Slavonic than on the Romance languages, but anything of the nature of a ballad appealed to him.

The Spanish preface of his little *romancero*, and the notes, few though they be, show that he was not content merely to reprint from the old Spanish song-book which had fallen in his way some years before. About the same time he was busy with the old French *Roman de Renart*, preparing his book on the Beast Epic, which among all his works was his favourite. But *Reinhart Fuchs* did not appear till 1834.

The *Deutsche Sagen* by the two brothers were published in 1816 and 1818; then in 1818 the first volume of the *Grammar*. Jacob Grimm was in his 34th year. He had done much scholarly work, both historical and critical, but nothing hitherto strictly and severely grammatical. And the *German Grammar*, one of the greatest philological works of the great age, appears to the author of it sometimes as only a kind of by-product, or at best an instrument, of the history of German poetry. This comes out most clearly in the *Preface* to the second edition (1822), which is not reprinted in the *Kleinere Schriften*, though it is one of the most characteristic essays of Jacob Grimm:

“It was the attraction of Middle High German poetry that led me first to engage in grammatical investigations; the other older dialects, with unreserved exception of the Old Northern and in less degree of the Anglo-Saxon, offer little poetry. There is a considerable quantity indeed of Middle Dutch and Old English works, but these are not to be brought into comparison. As was natural, then, I have treated the Middle High German grammar, and the Old High German, which is inseparable from it, in much greater detail than the remaining languages.”¹

¹ This significant passage is on p. viii.: Das einladende studium mittelhochdeutscher poesie führte mich zuerst auf grammatische

At the same time there are other passages showing that his interest in the German language sometimes wandered away from his best-loved poets. It was more robust and positive than one might gather from this passage taken separately. And he knew that his taste for language could stand more fatigue than his brother's could. Wilhelm, he says (the difference of taste is rather amusing), Wilhelm never set out to read *Ulfilas* or *Otfried* or *Notker* from beginning to end carefully ; but this careful reading is the way to make discoveries, says Jacob, and he himself has read those authors through repeatedly and has not done with them. So one sees that there is little weakness in his love of poetical beauty ; if he never forgets *Walther* and *Wolfram*, he does not allow them to discourage industry. Indeed, the rich details of the *Grammar*, the *Mythology*, and the *Legal Antiquities*—not to speak of the *Dictionary* or the *Weisthümer*—are not called together by mere romantic memory of old rhymes, though that is a strong part of the spell.

I may observe that Jacob Grimm had a very keen sense for pedantry ; he knew that words established in common use are not to be given up on irrelevant, however strictly scientific, grounds—so when he means Anglo-Saxon he says Anglo-Saxon. O.E. may be a convenient symbol to denote the same, but “ Old English ” has a meaning of its own which neither the Philological Society nor its Dictionary has any right to extirpate.

untersuchungen ; die übrigen älteren mundarten mit voller ausnahme des altnordischen, theilweiser des angelsächsischen, bieten wenig dichterisches ; eine ansehnliche masse mittelniederländischer und altenglischer werke lässt sich jenen doch kaum vergleichen. Es kann darum nicht befremden, dass ich die mittel- und die von ihr unzertrennliche althochdeutsche grammatik umständlicher abgehandelt habe, als die der übrigen sprachen.

He is not content with this short account of his procedure and motives ; he is not done with Middle High German poetry ; he lets himself go still further ; in the preface to a grammar, with *Lautverschiebung* to come, and *Umlaut* and *Ablaut*, and strong and weak declensions and conjugations, he writes a whole fresh paragraph in praise of Walther and Wolfram, Hartmann and Gottfried (this is the second preface, 1822), even quoting a phrase of Walther's and calling attention to one particular poem, the poem of old age : *owê war sint verwunden alliu mîniu jâr !* It is not exactly business, but it is very like Jacob Grimm.

The brothers Grimm have a place in the history of the Romantic School, but they are not subject to every vanity of that creature. They had not much taste for romantic excursions and inventions ; their temper is just the opposite of that empty romantic craving, like the hunger of lean kine, which sent the poets and novelists ranging over the Universe in search of subjects, properties, and local colour. There is a most significant passage in the tract *Ueber meine Entlassung* : —“ Authors who take up a neglected field are often absorbed in their devotion ; I hope that no one who knows my work will be able to charge me with indifference to the authority of the present time over our language, our poetry, our rights and institutions. Even if we were once better off, to-day we are what we are.”¹

Jacob Grimm is of the same mind as Wordsworth ; his romance is at home. He puts it finely in the dedi-

¹ Schriftsteller, die sich einem verlassnen felde widmen, pflegen ihm vorliebe zuzuwenden ; ich hoffe, wer meine arbeit näher kennt, dasz er mir keine art geringhaltung des groszen rechts, welches der waltenden gegenwart über unsere sprache, poesie, rechte und einrichtungen gebührt, nachweisen könne, denn selbst wo wir sonst besser waren, müssen wir heute so sein, wie wir sind.

cation to Savigny : " True poetry " (poetry again, you will observe, in the preface to a grammar), " true poetry is like a man who is happy anywhere in endless measure, if he is allowed to look at leaves and grass, to see the sun rise and set ; false poetry is like a man who travels abroad in strange countries and hopes to be uplifted by the mountains of Switzerland, the sky and sea of Italy ; he comes to them and is dissatisfied ; he is not as happy as the man who stays at home and sees his apple tree flowering every spring, and hears the small birds singing among the branches." Jacob Grimm's prejudice against the schools (*Schulweisheit*) is expressed in this context as strongly as Wordsworth's ; Nature as against school learning is revered with the same certainty of choice. It is perplexing at first to find this faith in Nature and this hatred of the schools proclaimed as an introduction to the first and second *Lautverschiebung* and other branches of learning. But there is no real difficulty. *Schulweisheit* means modern rationalism ; something like the Eighteenth Century in Carlyle ; the conceited and self-confident intellect which very probably cares as little for the first as for the second *Lautverschiebung*, and only knows Walther and Wolfram from the play-bill of Wagner's opera.

Philology, anyhow, can be practised by the simple-minded ; that seems to come out as a fair inference. It does not require what the worldling calls cleverness. But we must be on our guard against a voluntary humility.

All this work and more was done, the *Rechtsalterthümer* in 1828, the *Mythologie* in 1835, *Reinhart* completed and published in 1834, before the adventure which puts the names of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in

the public history of Germany and Europe—the protest of the seven professors of Göttingen against the tyranny of Ernest, King of Hanover.

Jacob Grimm's tract on his expulsion is what one might expect from his noble spirit ; there is nothing mean in it ; there are no personalities except as touching the king, the pro-rector of the university, the deans of faculties, and " my brother " ; he does not even give the names of the seven ; neither Dahlmann nor Gervinus nor Ewald is there—I cannot find the name of any single person except the late king, William IV., and Ernest, Duke of Cumberland.

The character of Jacob Grimm was brought to the touchstone ; his own report of the ordeal may be trusted ; an excerpt from the Chancery of Heaven could hardly be more sincere. His political faith is simple. His country is Hesse and Germany ; he respects the powers that be ; he belongs to no party ; he has no extreme faith in parliamentary government ; constitutions have a negative value—they are dikes against a devastating flood, while positive fertility is given by the benevolent grace of the monarch. But William IV. had established a constitution, and Ernest had by two successive decrees revoked it. In the sight of Grimm, Ernest had perjured himself, and it was the duty of *Georgia Augusta*, the University of Göttingen, to protest.

The brothers Grimm, against their will, had been led away from Hesse into Hanover ; and Hanover had thrown them out in December, 1831. Berlin took them up, and there they lived happily enough, and went on working.

Jacob Grimm, in the quiet end of his days, seems to have felt that the learned world was moving away from

him ; there is sadness in his voice as he speaks of the cool reception given to his *Weisthümer*, the great collection of German local laws and customs. In 1839, for the first two volumes, he writes with the old spirit, the same enthusiasm as in the preface to the *Meistergesang* or the *Grammar*. The *Weisthümer* are a fresh springing well, and he trusts the reading public to avail themselves of it. The new collection is destined to enrich and transform the history of German law, to give colour and warmth to the history of the German race, and contribute largely to the sciences of language, mythology, and manners.

In Berlin, at the end of his life, writing on the 13th of December, 1862, for the fourth volume, he confesses that he has been disappointed : " My collection has been rather coolly received, and there has been no great rush of scholars to this fountain." ¹ A little disappointed, but with all his old courage and industry, he faces the evening. " Now is the time when all the lights wax dim."

For every student it must be of interest to follow the record of so great a learner and teacher, so enthusiastic and so painstaking. And by the way it may be interesting to compare the opinions of Jacob Grimm with those of his great contemporary Hegel. The men resemble one another in their vast ideals and their capacity for taking pains ; and Hegel was, further, himself a student of literary history and especially of poetry. At first we may be inclined to say that he and Jacob Grimm divide the range of poetry between them ; Hegel's poets are the tragedians, while for Grimm dramatic poetry is something like the devil ;

¹ Meine sammlung ist doch lau empfangen worden, und die forscher sind dieser quelle wenig zugetreten.

it is that mode of human thought most different from Nature-poetry, from the inspired original epic of the golden heroic age. Hegel speaks slightly of the *Nibelungen* (though he respects Ossian) ; he looks like a champion of the classics against the barbarism of the North. But he is much more liberal than he sometimes appears, and more in agreement with the tastes of the brothers Grimm. He is fond of ballads ; he names Fauriel's collection of Romaic popular songs ; he has higher praise for the Arabian poems of the " Ignorance " ; the Cid is one of his heroes ; and his descriptions of the heroic age and of the age of chivalry show his talent as an abstractor of quintessence, as well as his sympathy with the literary fashions of his time, even with the Romantic School. Hegel died nine years before the Grimms came to Berlin.

Grimm's large additions to positive science seem at times like the result of chance. They came as a precipitate from the most extraordinary vague vapour of ideas—a strange enthusiastic religion, the worship of an imaginary golden age. In details, the work of Jacob Grimm is sometimes as extravagant as the derivation of *cheval* from *equus* : Plato's *Cratylus* is no more antiquated in philology than some of the early papers of Jacob Grimm. But the cloud of his fancies and aspirations had fire and life in it ; and the history of Jacob Grimm, his progress and his conquests, is a demonstration of the power of that great god *Wish* whom Jacob Grimm was the first to name.¹ The moral seems to be *Fay ce que voudras*, when that counsel is rightly understood. It was never intended for any but honourable persons, and of such was Jacob Grimm, and Wilhelm his brother.

¹ *Deutsche Mythologie* (1835), p. 99.

XXXIII

ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART

PLATO in the *Protagoras* makes Socrates say that conversation about poetry and the meaning of poetry should be left to people who have not completed their education and are not able to converse freely. The vulgar like to dispute about the interpretation of the sayings of poets, who cannot come into the company to answer for themselves; men who have been well schooled prefer, in their conversation, to go on without the help or the distraction of poetry, "each one in the company taking his turn to speak and listen in due order, even though they be drinking deep." To turn conversation into a wrangle about the interpretation of poetical passages is hardly less a sign of want of education than to bring in flute players in order to save the banqueters from the sound of their own voices. Socrates, before making this contemptuous speech, had criticised and explained a passage of Simonides in a way that shows how possible it is for a critic to maintain his freedom and speak his own mind while professing to draw out the hidden meaning of his author; how the sermon may be made a different thing from the text. The whole passage is characteristic of an age which has grown too old for poetry, which is determined to work out its own problems with its own understanding, not

expecting much help nor fearing much hindrance from the wisdom of bygone ages. The belief that is the centre of all Plato's theories of art is expressed here. Stated rudely, the belief is this, that art has lost its authority, that the poets and their followers are well-meaning men who would have to-day rule itself by yesterday's wisdom, whereas to-day has its own light to which yesterday's light is an impertinence. Enlightened men speak the thoughts that are in them, free from bondage to the letter of ancient wisdom ; the philosopher knows clearly what the poets knew vaguely and confusedly. Plato's various theories of art are all expansions of this speech in the *Protagoras*. At the worst, art is a false semblance ; at the best it is an education. The philosopher knows what beauty is better than they do who listen to the singers in the market-place. There cannot but be a quarrel between poetry and philosophy ; poetry is weak, imperfect, and ignorant, pretends to be strong and all-seeing. Philosophy secures its own position by showing how poetry in its proper place may be the servant of truth, and how dangerous to truth it may be in its light-minded pretence of omniscience.

This dissatisfaction with art is not mere puritanic bitterness, not the caprice of a sectarian who sets himself against the common belief of the world. Plato is speaking for his age, not against it. He has no innate spite against art, he has the sincerest reverence for it, yet he cannot choose but bring it down from its height, because the age for which he is speaking knows that there are results to be gained which cannot be gained in the old ways, that the philosophers are working towards new ends of which the poets and image-makers have never dreamt. This is the way in which the

attitude of Plato towards art becomes intelligible. It seemed to him that art with all its excellence was not enough for the needs of a new age, and that it should not be allowed to claim more than its fair share of respect from men who were in search of truth, who were minded to try what they could make out themselves, "speaking and listening among themselves," without superstition or bondage to idols. Yet no one more than Plato recognised the value of poetry, of imagination, in the progress of the mind towards pure truth. He did not contradict himself in so doing. He denied that poetry was the whole of wisdom; he did not deny that it was the beginning of wisdom. It is the positive side of his theorising about art which has been best remembered. The polemic against the teaching of the poets was forgotten. The belief that the beauty of sensible things is in some way the image of an unscen beauty remained as an element of many later philosophies, the creed, of not a few poets. There is something in it which wins an assent that is not altogether founded on a critical investigation. The theory that the youth are to dwell in a place of pleasant sights and sounds, and to grow up unconsciously into the image of reason, that when reason comes they may welcome it as not alien—all this is heard at first as a story which ought to be true, which overcomes prejudice at the outset. The difficulty is to fix the details of the story. The listener wants to know more about the beauty and more about the reason, and know where, if anywhere, there is anything like this progress from the half-conscious life among beautiful things to the awakened life in reason.

This theory in the *Republic* and the similar theories in the *Symposium* and the *Phædrus* are the first

attempts at a philosophy of beauty. They describe in dark language a relation of the manifold beautiful things to the one unchangeable idea of beauty, and describe the progress of the soul from the beauty of the manifold things of sense to the unity of reason or of the idea of beauty. If there be such a progress, it is obviously in it that the secret of beauty lies. But how are we to conceive this progress? What is the idea in which it ends? The education which begins in art and ends in philosophy, how does this resemble or differ from other progresses of mind; for example, the progress of any mind, however ill educated or uneducated, from the unreal world of childhood to the more or less real world of common sense, or the historical progress of nations from myths to rationalism. Everyone knows that there are some progresses in which the mind rejects old fancies for new truths, turning in revolt against its old self; are there others, like this one of the *Republic* or this one of the *Symposium*, in which the old unreal things which are passed by are not falsehoods but images of the truth? And supposing that art stands in some such relation as this to philosophy, will it not be of some importance to know what is to become of the images when the reality is attained to, of the pleasant places of art when philosophy is perfected, of the manifold shapes of beauty when the one idea of beauty is revealed? Are they to be rejected as Socrates rejected the wisdom of the elder moralists, as Plato rejected the art which was an imitation? Plato's own attitude towards art is a continual wavering between two opinions, which are both based on the one sure opinion that the poets do not at any rate contain all wisdom. Admitting this sure opinion, there are still two alternatives to Plato: sometimes he is for

expelling the poets altogether ; sometimes he speaks more gently of them, as servants of the Divine Wisdom, who say more than they know, more than sane men are able to say. The difficulty which he finds in explaining art, and the poet's character, and the beauty of sensible things, arises from his opposition to them. He is the first philosopher to attempt to make a philosophy of art, and the sum of that philosophy is that art and philosophy are different. It is the imperfection of art, the imperfection of a visible beauty, which he emphasises. To be content with art is a fatal mistake ; it is to prefer opinion to knowledge. Thus Plato's philosophy of art was almost wholly negative. It could not help being negative to begin with, could not help asserting its superiority as critic over the matter criticised. The first thing of importance to be said about art is that there is a science which goes beyond it ; and Plato said this, and described in many ways the movement of the mind from the scattered things of sense to the unity which they reflect. But he never succeeded in teaching anyone that science of unity ; what he taught was that science of the unity was to be sought after. And so long as this science was unattained, the unity, the universal, was simply an abstraction of which the only thing that could be said was that it is a negation of the many, of the particulars—including them in some way, but in some undefined, unknown way—including them as a limit outside of them. Plato recognised that the relation of the many to the one was not explained simply by being stated ; he recognised that the many were not a mere negation of the one—that wrong opinion was possible—that knowledge of the inexact line and the inexact circle has its place in the world for those who wish to find

their road home.¹ He apprehended that the ideal was not always the truth. The criticism of Simonides in the *Protagoras* succeeds in showing that the ideal is often much respected by bad men who find their actual circumstances irksome ; that the duty of a man often compels him to leave an ideal alone and be loyal to his kinsfolk, *accepting* the particular circumstances in which he is placed. This apprehension of the value of particular things is never elaborated by Plato into part of the science of the universal ; so that at the end there is little more said than that there is one idea, and that there is a progress of the mind from particulars to this universal through successive stages of subordinate universals. So the end of his philosophy of art is that there is one idea of beauty, eternal, the same with itself, not in any likeness of anything in heaven or earth, and that the earthly beauty is a stage on the way to this. That is the end, that is the philosophy of earthly beauty—that it is nothing in comparison with the one idea of beauty, that it passes away as the thought goes beyond it to reach the idea of beauty. Plato praises art, regarding it as a step on the way to true knowledge, and blames it, regarding it as without life in itself, as without any principle in it which can give permanency or authority ; but whether he praise it or blame it his view of it is always this, that it is valueless in comparison with philosophy. At its best it is a makeshift, at its worst it is a makeshift pretending to be a chief good. This theory of art is unsatisfactory because of its meagreness, its abstraction, but it is necessarily the first philosophy of art. The first point in the creation of a philosophy of art is the separation of art and philosophy—the hostility of philosophy to art. Philosophy

¹ *Philebus*, 62 B,

comes in a time succeeding the time of the flourishing of art, and to justify its own existence has to prove that art is not the whole of wisdom, not the summit of man's history. Philosophies of art, to begin with, are either puritanic ἐλεγχοί of art, proving that art is vanity, or theories of the fitness of things according to which fitness art leads the way to true knowledge, to enlightenment. The view of art as an education is the natural one for enlightenment to adopt. It has an appearance of justice, because it admits the value of art, and it does justice to enlightenment itself by making it the end to which art is an instrument. There is and must be an enmity of philosophy towards art, because it is an opposition to the past, which art represents, that philosophy arises. Criticism is enmity, to begin with. The first step towards reconciliation of this enmity is to show that the matter criticised is not really hostile, but really exists for the sake of the critic. It is this step which is taken by any theory which regards art as an education—as existing for the sake of something higher, namely enlightenment, accurate and self-conscious insight. This reconciliation is imperfect because art, the subject criticised, the instrument existing for the sake of the end, which is enlightenment, maintains its separate existence in spite of the critic, pursues its own ends without regard to the existence of any enmity against itself, or to any disputing in the Schools about the end of art.

Ella s'è beata e ciò non ode.

The theory that art is an education does not make art much easier to be understood. That art exists for the sake of something else may be a fact about it, but does not reveal anything of the laws of art itself, of the

end which it realises for those unfortunate people who have not yet passed beyond the stage of art. That is to say, that however true it may be that art is an education, or a step to something higher, it is still impossible to explain art fully by reference to the something higher, because for the artist art is not this education, not this step, but an end in itself. And it is a reasonable claim that art should be considered as an end in itself—as an activity following its own laws. If it be not this, then the opinion is wrong. But wrong opinion is not nothing. Wrong opinion is as complicated as right opinion, is as much a *positive fact* as right opinion. So in this case, art, as it is for the artist, is not explained by the statement that art is not the goal of the mind, that it is not an end in itself. If art be an education leading to philosophy, and the philosophy to which it leads be worth anything, then it ought to be possible for philosophy to regard art not merely as an incident in the development of philosophy, but as a form of activity with its own laws and its own history. Art may be a king to whom it has been given to be the nursing father of philosophy, but in his own kingdom that title is not ascribed to the king openly, and it is in no case the whole truth of the kingship.

The theory that art is an education is of very doubtful value if taken by itself. Art is certainly an education for the artist: with other men it is less certainly an education. And it is seldom an education whose pupils can boast that they have done with it. It is true that there are cases of great artists withdrawing themselves for a time from art into the sphere of pure thought, making art for a time external to them in place of being the spirit of their life and work. But these periods of abstraction lead not always to renunciation of art, and

sometimes lead to a higher kind of art, to perfection in art, so that regarding the lives of individual artists it is impossible to arrive at any certain formula. Sometimes it seems that art is the porch of philosophy, sometimes that philosophy is for the individual artist only a passing phase in his life, a centre of indifference, not fruitless, but leading to the production of different beauty, from the incorporated beauty which Plato wrote of in the *Symposium*.

Dante describes a change in his life which is like that which Plato related of the favoured children of his *Republic*. Dante tells in the *Convito* how, after the death of Beatrice, when the fantastic world of his youth was broken in pieces, he went to philosophy (in Boëthius and others) for consolation. There, he says, seeking silver he found gold ; he found not only remedy for his grief, but clear knowledge, whereas his mind before had seen many things but only as in dreams, which things were written of in the *Vita Nuova*.¹

This confession of Dante about himself and the way in which he came to the knowledge of philosophy is of some value. It describes a progress of the mind in a way which may enable us to understand what is meant by saying that those who are brought up among fair sights and sounds will find when reason comes to them that it is no unfamiliar thing. But the parallel does not hold absolutely. It is dangerous to force the resemblance between the prophetic utterance of Plato and the actual life of the man who was not suffered to become a guardian of his earthly city. The world of imagination in which Dante spent his youth was a world in which poetry was not a natural growth, but

¹ *Convito*, ii. 13. " Per lo quale ingegno molte cose quasi come sognando già veda,"

in great part philosophy disguised—idealism and symbolism which owed a good deal to the Schools. And the progress of Dante did not end with his entry into the Schools. The clear vision of abstract ideas, or not of them only. The *Vita Nuova* is more removed from actual life than the *Paradiso*: the vision of the Highest is at the same time the vision of the narrow streets where the unrighteous dwell, the Monna Berta and Ser Martino who pass infallible judgments upon sinners. Dante at one time, he tells us, read till he grew nearly blind, trying to unravel the mystery of First Matter; but he did not end in these abstractions. He gathers together into one vision all things and all men that he had ever seen or heard of, and in the vision of them he finds his wisdom—of them and of the unseen ruler, in whose mind all things are determined, the meanest chances of earth no less than the highest self-proven truths. Such art as this is not to be explained by the ready formula that fair sights and sounds are good for weak minds that have hope of becoming stronger. We can understand how the youth of Dante was educated by the world of symbolism and mysticism in which he lived, by the pure enthusiasm of the poets: we can understand how this corresponds in some measure to the place of beauty in which Plato's fosterlings were to be trained. We can understand how the abstractions of philosophy were welcomed as expressing what had before been dreamt of. We can understand also in part how the abstractions were discovered to be abstractions: how the memory of visible things and the knowledge of them in their particularity, as having value of their own, became the end of his philosophy. We can see that however true it may be that art is an education, it does not necessarily

mean that it is an education for some end different from art. All artists are educated in this way, in this half-conscious apprehension of beauty. The history of almost every great artist tells how his life begins in vague enjoyment of beautiful surroundings : he lives in a world of beauty, of which he is part and which he only half understands. He conforms to the fashion of the world in which he lives : his early works are no better than those of his fellows, not at least in the opinion of his own age. As he grows older he asserts his freedom : he works no longer as a mere natural outgrowth from his nation and his time, but as a free man walking his own way in the world, seeing things as they are, valuing them for himself, not as others have valued them before. Chaucer in his later life is not merely part of the pageantry of the English court : he is not merely a spectator, not merely a singing man in the show. He is *more immediately* part of the life of the time when he is with the English army in France, learning to rhyme fashionably about cruelty and pity. He has made his place for himself, gained for himself his freedom, when he sets down his own view of his age in the prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*. He is not less but more an Englishman of the fourteenth century because he belongs to his age, not simply as the trees that grew and blossomed according to the fashion of these years, but as a free man who, while not ashamed of being a child of time, does not hold that "thought's the slave of life, and life time's fool." He is not the less the brother of the Englishmen his contemporaries because he in a manner withdrew from them for a time, and set down their outward appearance in his book. But he did withdraw from them, he did refuse to be bound by laws of art which were not true

for him, to see things with other men's eyes. In this refusal is the end of his apprenticeship.

The creative memory of the artist is as different as abstract philosophy from ordinary experience which grows unconsciously. There is a difference between the unconscious manner in which beauty of art or nature influences the mind of the pupil, and the manner in which the perfect artist works in full consciousness of the end at which he is aiming and the means by which he is to attain it, if not always with perfect consciousness or developed curiosity concerning the sources of his power.

The problem for the philosophy of art is thus not merely "how is philosophy to indicate its claim to supersede art, as being perfect science of that which art feels after blindly?" but "what is the kind of end which the artist attains? how are we to analyse the relation of works of art to the mind?"

Art and science are very much alike at the beginning. Science does not know anything *about* things at the beginning; it simply perceives things—or rather, simple perception, to perceive things clearly, is the ideal which early science aims at—which it does not always attain. It is here that art begins its services to mankind. The bone knives found in the caves of the Dordogne show that the artists who engraved them saw reindeer clearly, and were ingenuously interested in them, having reached a stage of civilisation and wealth in which they were not simply ravenous for reindeer, but could afford to contemplate them with self-restraint, like gentlemen. Their contemplative leisure employed the keen eyesight, no longer that of a beast of prey, and the interest, no longer of the stomach, in engraving a clear outline of the interesting animal

on the handles of their hunting knives. Other early engravings show how the mammoth might be made, by untrembling hands, into a lasting ornament. The idols that stand in the porch of the British Museum show that some long-forgotten dwellers in the Easter Islands grew one day to be *securi adversus deos*, and employed their security in making images of the beings they worshipped, in order to know what sort of beings they were. When it is said that the makers of such images had reached a certain degree of civilisation, it is not meant merely that they had attained some technical skill in shaping materials, but that they had so far raised themselves above the level of the beasts, so far withdrawn themselves from sensation and appetite, as to be able to make permanent for themselves the objects of their interest and their worship. This defining of the perceived or imagined object is the great triumph of early art, and it is at the same time the beginning of science, of clear knowledge. Thus early art is sometimes extremely realistic, and seems to accompany wonderful powers of perception—of combining various particulars in one intuition. The Esquimaux, who draw the things they see with some skill, are said sometimes to show a talent for remembering locality, the relative positions of places, so as to be able to make fairly accurate charts of a coast after a short acquaintance with it. The artistic faculty of clear apprehension of details here has to do duty for science.

How does completed science differ from completed art? For science the particular visible object is unimportant, or important only as an example of a general law, or as material for an experiment to lead to the knowledge of a general law, or as a member of a species,

interesting and intelligible, not in itself but as a member of the species—the species itself being interesting and intelligible only as having a definite place in the universe, as standing in a definite relation to other things. Things are interesting to science not for what they *are*, but for what they *are not*, that is, for the other things to which they are related, or still more, for the relation—for the general formula of relations which sums up the truth about the particular things. Science is thus an endless process. It is perpetually busied with certain things of the outward world, but interested in them only as they point to other things. The particular things with which science deals are instruments, not ends in themselves. The particular member of a species is of little more importance to science than the particular chalk triangle drawn on a particular slate. The triangle is merely a perceptible repetition of one type, the truth about which type is quite independent of the particular chalk triangle. The particular member of a species has no importance, unless it has some individual peculiarities which make it different from its species, in which case it may be important as one of a new species. But in no case has it any importance in itself. It has importance either as being an example of a species in which the characteristics of the species may be known and demonstrated ; or as a link in a chain of causation, and it is the chain, not the link, which is important. Even individuals, having from one point of view value in and for themselves, may for science be simply instruments and specimens to demonstrate the working of a law, or particular phenomena, whose importance is not themselves but in their causes or effects. Mahomet or Columbus may be considered by scientific history not as individuals interesting in themselves, but as

single terms in a series. History is not interested in any single event, or in any individual man, but in the *relations* of men and of events.

In art the case is altogether different. There the particular thing exists with a being of its own, as a thing which can suffer nothing else to stand in the place of it, as something which cannot be exhausted by any formula or expressed in words, as something whose relation to other things, to causes or effects or laws, is altogether a subordinate matter—not the true essence, but an accident which not even inadequately can express the nature of the thing. Both art and science have their end to make things clear to the mind. But science makes things clear by perpetual reference to other things. Its activity is an endless process ; its kingdom of light is rounded by the darkness of the unknown on which it encroaches, but which it can never conquer. Art does not make things clear to the understanding which asks the reasons of things and their connection with other things. Its creations do not prove anything ; they have no reference to things beyond themselves, they add nothing to knowledge, they do not throw light upon the natures of things, they are themselves clear and definite objects, that is all. The things which art makes are interesting to the mind with an interest quite different from that which belongs to the demonstrations of science. Science throws light on a portion of the object world ; clearing it up, showing the secret of it, the unapparent law of its being ; using particular perceptible things as instruments to demonstrate the law. Art makes a thing which is not an instrument by which to demonstrate the general law of a class of objects, but is free, serving no law but its own, revealing itself, and nothing but

itself, to the mind. Science is face to face with an object world, which is a system of related classes of things, and explains certain classes of those things, regarding each thing as an example of a class, and each class as explicable by formulas more or less fixed. Art makes new things, whose value is that they explain themselves in a way with which science is unacquainted. Art satisfies the mind not by affording it new examples for experiment, from which to arrive at new truths of the objective world, but by presenting to it objects which have that freedom from dependence on other things and other laws, that unity in themselves, which is wanting in all the objects of science—in the object world which for science is never a whole complete in all its parts, and is *one* world only *ex hypothesi*. The work of art is an object which is only partially or accidentally subject to the laws of the object world; which is in the world but not of it. A statue is a perceived object, a particular thing in the object world, but it is not to be explained scientifically, like other objects, like natural things, as a member of a species, as standing in particular relations to the universe. It is not to be explained by reference to other things; its nature is that it explains itself. It is not a problem to be solved; or rather it is both problem and solution, both the secret and the revelation of the secret. This does not mean that works of art are exempt from the law by which the universe is one and all the parts of it correlated; this is not to say that there can be no science of art things, or that they can be *understood* apart from their history. But all histories or explanations are inadequate—not as in other cases because the relations of any one thing to the rest of the universe are inexhaustible; but because

they regard works of art *only* as phenomena to be explained, and forget the main point, that they are phenomena which explain themselves.

The work of art is separate from the world in which it exists. It is a contradiction to any theory which would regard each thing as a point in an endless series of relations. The work of art is a thing which will not be explained, like other things, by a natural history or a statement of its relations to other things. It is in one sense finite, because it has had a history, because it stands in relation to other things that are finite. In another sense it is not a finite thing, because its nature will not yield itself to analysis ; it cannot be dissected. There is a point at which its history ceases, and *only then* does it exist ; before that it is not. It is a commonplace that the beauty of things adds nothing to the matter of knowledge. Works of art add nothing to knowledge except themselves. It is their essence that they should be known. The mind which perceives them apprehends them not as new phenomena which are to have their place assigned them, after due consideration, in relation to other objects in the complicated world. The mind apprehends them at once as things which have no other nature than to be apprehended. They are not things which are to be brought into harmony with the mind by having their relations with other things and the universe explained. They are things which have no necessary relation except to the mind ; which are from the first akin to the mind and formed for it, so that being seen they are intelligible. They are not any more intelligible in themselves for any trouble that science may take to get beyond them and inside them, to find out the machinery and the secret of them.

Science and history may discover a great deal about them, but they remain intelligible in their own way, indifferent to science and history. Their way of being intelligible is not altered by science; science may, indeed, modify the individual's appreciation of works of art or of art effect, but it does not put its explanation in place of the works of art. The student of the science of art hears his lecture (from the Pythagoreans or others), and does not forget his lecture when listening to music; but however the lecture may improve or interfere with his individual appreciation of the music, it does not alter the *mode* in which the music is apprehended by him. The value of the music to the hearer, be it great or small, is a different thing from its value to the student of physics. And its being heard—its being apprehended in this way—is the whole history, the whole life of the piece of music. The things of the object world, the things with which science is busied, have histories of their own, and make demand upon science that their histories shall be discovered and made clear to the understanding; that something shall be predicated of them. The work of art makes no such demand. It declares itself what it is, and refuses to be compared with other things; refuses to have anything predicated of it which can imply that it is different from what it appears. It is above the world of movement. The one relation which is necessary to it is the relation to the mind that apprehends it.

The relations of objective things can never be summed up. The progress of science is an endless progress. Works of art as things of the objective world are not exempt from this law; it is impossible to know everything about them, as it is impossible to know everything about anything. But considered in themselves

they are exempt from this law, because at the first view of them they are apprehended, not as appearances with an unknown reality behind them, but as appearances whose reality is in their appearance; not as problematic things, but as the solution of a problem; not as starting-points of an inquiry, but as unities whose freedom is unimpaired by external or accidental relations.

From one point of view they are unreal and dead, because they have no share in the give and take of the universe. They are removed from all possibility of change, except the change of material decay and the passing into oblivion. This is one aspect of works of art. In another aspect this apparent deadness becomes a life higher than any life of natural things. The changelessness of the works of art is not death. They are unchanging because they are worlds in themselves, their various parts correspond to the various stages of existence in the object world, and the parts of the work of art are apprehended at once in the apprehension of the completed work, as the various stages of existence would be apprehended if the endless progress of science were to come to an end, and the universe be grasped in one intuition. The work of art is *formally* a solution of this contradiction between the abstract unity of science and the endless process towards it—it does not really do anything to make this contradiction less of a contradiction in the objective world, but it gives an example to show that it is not a contradiction in which the mind is in all cases forced to lose itself. The work of art is a proof that completed knowledge—knowledge which does not imply an endless process—is possible to the mind. The freedom gained by art is an earnest of freedom; a proof that freedom is not a mere ideal.

In all knowledge of the objective world there is a contradiction between the two elements of knowledge, the particular and the universal. The particular thing, with its differences, is known only in relation to that which is permanent and unchangeable, and one. At first neither of the sides has much meaning, but with the progress of knowledge both sides increase in meaning; the manifold is seen to be an ordered world, the unity is not an abstraction but the regulating principle in the manifold. The progress of science is, however, subject to this contradiction, which for science is insuperable, that as it is impossible to exhaust the manifold of the object world, it is impossible ever to attain complete knowledge of the unity as it is shown in the manifold. Science has to go on accomplishing its impossibilities, increasing the sum of knowledge, without drawing any nearer the end of the unknown. Art is the first attempt to find a cure for this. It is a mode in which the mind can make part of the objective world intelligible to itself without being troubled by continual reference to other parts of the objective world beyond the limits it has chosen. It is a return of the mind to itself from seeking fact after fact and law after law in the objective world; a recognition that the mind itself is an end to itself, and its own law.

A moral act is analogous to a creation of art in this way, that it is a denial of the necessity which belongs to the objective world and its laws. It differs from the creation of art in this way, that it has to lose itself apparently in the objective world again. It is an act done to carry out principles that are universally true, but as a *matter of fact* its importance is limited. It is a phenomenon whose true nature is not wholly apparent.

The freedom asserted is the freedom of the individual, and that freedom is inward. The freedom gained in the work of art is apparent and universal, it remains to be beheld by all men. The moral act, like the work of art, is individual ; nothing else can be put in its place, and in that particular phenomenon the universal reason expresses itself. But not, as in the work of art, for the sake of the expression, for the sake of contemplation, not in order to raise the particular phenomenon, the particular matter, above the complication of the outward necessity, but in obedience to an inner law which does not outwardly contradict the necessity. A moral act, like any other event, is subject to the laws of objective relation, to the necessities of time, of cause and effect. It is outwardly finite and passes away disregarded. Only in the character of the man who does the act is it that the act acquires its freedom, only he knows the value of it. Morality progresses, like science, not by withdrawing itself from the necessity of the objective world, but by accepting that necessity in order to conquer it point by point. The man who is working out his moral freedom has to accept all the shocks of events that come upon him in the form of necessity, in order to give them their moral meaning ; and the acts by which he asserts his moral freedom have the appearance of natural events. Hence his progress is endless, because the objective world with which he connects himself is an endless series ; hence he has to be content to be free without appearing free. His acts are not done for the sake of appearance but for the sake of reality. They differ from the ordinary events of the objective world in that they are not to be understood by references to the external events with which they are connected. Their true meaning is in themselves,

and in this they resemble works of art. They differ from works of art in that their appearance is not their reality. They appear to be nothing but events in a necessary sequence of causes and effects, but their true meaning is not to be exhausted by exhausting all external influences inside or outside the body of the man who has done the acts. Their true meaning can be gained only by knowledge of the character which is the author of them. The moral character cannot express itself otherwise than in particular acts, as the artist's ideal beauty cannot appear except in particular creations. But the particular acts that express the moral character do not fully express it ; no moral act is wholly free ; whereas the particular beautiful creations which exist only for the sake of appearance do fully express what they are.

The world of morality is the same world as that of science—the world of finite things and particular events—and morality like science is in opposition to it. The opinion with which science begins is that truth is not apparent ; that things as perceived are known only partially, that the relations of things to one another and to the universe are secret, and have to be discovered. Science is in opposition to the apparent universe—the disconnected world of particular things—and its progress is to bring to light more and more the real connection of things. But it can never accomplish its progress. It goes on in faith that nowhere will anything be found to contradict its conception of the unity of the universe, but it can never succeed in proving this in detail, in showing the place of each thing in the universe. Morality also begins in a contradiction between reality and appearance, but the progress of morality is not, like that of science, to start from the appearance and

reach the hidden reality. It starts from reality, from the self which is reality to itself, but which at first has no connection with the objective world except the pure negative consciousness of freedom from subjection to the objective world. The progress of morality is to make that apparent which is real, to live in the objective world a life whose law is not discoverable among the laws of the objective world, but only in the self which is a law to itself. Morality begins in pure theory. It is pure self-consciousness and nothing more, the negation of all that is outward—the pure negative “I am not subject to necessity.” But this inward unity which is proof against all the shocks of time, which is not subject to the objective necessity of particular finite events, is so far in contradiction with itself that it is merely inward and therefore finite, limited by those very finite events whose value it theoretically denies. The self-consciousness would believe itself to be absolute in itself, but it finds that it is absolute only so long as it does nothing. Its freedom is not freedom to do anything, it is mere negation. Then begins the endless progress of morality; it is forced outward into the objective world to make that freedom *apparent* which to the self-conscious subject is the reality of realities. The presupposition of morality is that there is a freedom superior to the incomprehensible necessity of events, and that that freedom must make itself the law of outward things, taking up into itself the necessity of outward things, and becoming the only true explanation of actions which apparently are subject to the ordinary necessities of the objective world. Like science, morality conquers point by point, and like science its progress is endless. The nature of its conquest is this, that the particular acts which are called moral are not to be

explained simply by reference to other particular events in an objective world, which is *one* world *ex hypothesi*, but must be explained by reference to a unity which is not hypothetical, namely the free individual whose conscious self is not an event nor a particular link in the chain of causation.

There is this resemblance between science and morality, that in both cases reality remains reality, behind the appearance, and appearance remains appearance, hiding the reality. The ordinary perception of things remains one thing, and the scientific explanation of things another. The moral act does not outwardly show its real nature, it appears simply as an event. The moral value of an act cannot be proved to a man who is content with discovering an apparent motive of self-interest.

Art resembles both science and morality in that it is a conquest of nature. It differs from them both, because it is not an endless process ; secondly, because its product is the unity of reality and appearance. The freedom that it gains is complete because it has not to refer to anything beyond itself, to any horizon beyond which all is unknown, or any ought-to-be which is not yet realised. In art the opposition between the one and the many, between the law and its manifestation, between the subject and the object, is overcome. It is overcome not by simple abolition of the distinction between them, but by uniting them that each receives the meaning of the other. In art the subject does not express itself in its limitation, in its abstraction, asserting abstractly its superiority to nature and to natural conditions. This assertion of freedom is pure emptiness, a beginning of movement, a point, not a universe. In art the subject goes out into the objective world, and

redeems part of that world from bondage to natural laws, makes it the revelation of freedom. The subject is no longer a self-conscious atom separated from the world, anxiously craving for increase in its knowledge of an inexhaustible manifold universe ; it has learned from morality that the unity of the universe is not to be sought in the objective world and its laws, because the self is higher than those laws. Neither is it bound by the prejudices of morality which would place the completion of freedom in an unapproachable future. Art is the vindication of present freedom. Moral freedom may be always limited on its phenomenal side by particular contingencies ; there is always an apparent contradiction between what a man appears and what he ought to be ; his best actions " are not done without a motive," or " are not unmixed good," or " are exceedingly well intended." But the works of art are perfect, they express what they are intended to express. They are not simply the acts of an individual, which may be interpreted as good or bad according to the intentions of the individual. They are not particular things with an unknown essence behind them. They are particular things which are to be interpreted or apprehended for what they are. They are particular things whose meaning is universal, yet whose meaning is nothing apart from the particularity. Existing in the world of finitude they have nothing to do with it. They exist only for the mind. They are things which are not things, because in them particularity does not mean separation of reality and appearance, as it does with all other things.

Art is not to be explained by the categories which are applicable to finite things. Art is not to be explained, *e.g.*, by any physiological or psychological inquiries

about the physical conditions of æsthetic perception. All such inquiries, however successful, can only result in what, as far as art is concerned, is meaningless abstraction, because they explain something which is totally different from the work of art, namely its condition—things which have to be *before* the work of art can be apprehended. But they can tell nothing about the work of art as apprehended, because of this self-sufficingness of art which will not allow any analysis to explain its works without making them something different from what they really are.

Art is not to be explained by including it in the subject matter of ethics, by treating it as a stage in the education of the individual, or as the storehouse of the ideals of virtue, because the moral worth of art is accidental to it, it is not the servant of practical life, no pedagogue to show men the way to a better life; it stands beyond morality, has overcome the contradiction which morality is overcoming.

Then is art not to be explained in any way? to be left untroubled in its own kingdom? Perhaps not if there be other methods of explanation than the methods of natural history or physical science. The works of art are to be left to be appreciated one by one, simply to fulfil their own end without question, only if the unity and the freedom which belong to art are the highest attainable by the mind. But there is a finitude in the works of art which is a challenge to the reason, though not the same finitude as that of the natural things which science explains. Its finitude is not that it is an unexplained thing, but that it is an insufficient explanation, a partial revelation. It is infinite because it is raised above the flux of things, free from the darkness and incomprehensibility which is the curse of

finite things considered in themselves ; free from the infinite multiplicity of reference to all other atoms in the universe which is characteristic of the particular things of the outward world. It is finite because the mind goes beyond it, because it is not the highest mode in which thought reveals itself to itself. Art is subject not to the criticisms of science, but to the thought which has thought itself for an object, which criticises the methods of science as it criticises sensation and perception, and morality, and all the ways in which mind exerts itself.

Art is higher than science in this way, that it is not limited by an objective world which is superior to it, which defies all efforts to exhaust it. Art can boast of conquests which are absolute, can point to finished work which it is impossible to mend, which contains *in itself* no seed of decay.

It conquers by taking that very particularity which forms the limitation of science and making it universal, making it a thing of infinite value, a thing which the mind accepts as in itself intelligible. Any account of the world which rests satisfied with the mechanical categories of science thus shatters itself against the creations of art and is condemned by them as inadequate. But this conquest of art over the limitations of science is purchased at some cost : the particularity of the work of art, which is quite different from the particularity of natural things, still remains as a limitation. It is a limit beyond which lies, not the objective world, but the intellectual world to which the work of art belongs. The science of that world is not an endless process, but the activity of thought which has come to know that the unity which is the presupposition of science is thought, that the moral ideal of freedom is

thought, and that it is thought which in the work of art finds its own image.

The philosophy of art must necessarily be less abstract than pure metaphysics or ethics, because it is not like them a criticism or a statement of universal conditions ; it does not simply state what is true of all art, as metaphysics or ethics state what is true of all experience and of all morality. The philosophy of art cannot speak, or not for long, of the sublime and the beautiful in the abstract. It must recognise what is particular and apparently contingent and inexplicable in the creations of art. It must recognise that they are necessarily connected each with its own particular time. Metaphysics and ethics may look on experience and morality abstractly, apart from any reference to the history of man, considering the elements in them that are one and the same in all minds. The philosophy of art must be a philosophy of history as well. Its end is not to state abstractly what the elements in art-creation or æsthetic apprehension are, which are the same in all cases. It recognises that what is important in creations of art is not their identity but their difference, their individuality, not their conformity to any type or standard. Part of their individuality is their relation to particular times and seasons in the actual history of the world. The problem of the philosophy of art is to make the history of art intelligible—not simply a series of biographies or catalogues, of artists or their works, but a history showing the place of art in the development of the human reason. It is not a light task, but it is not an impossibility. It is simply a working out of the problem which finds many occasions to present itself nowadays. “ What is meant by saying that the art of a people or a century enables us to

understand the people or the century?" What is there in art which makes it a kind of explanation of things apparently so different from itself? Is it anything but an amiable illusion to suppose that Greek art has more than an external relation to Greek history? or that anything can be inferred from the history of art about the progress of humanity as a whole? The philosophy of art will have to show whether the creations of art are to be regarded as fortuitous appearances, inexplicable—as they certainly are—by any of the ordinary methods of science, or whether they are to find their place in the history, not of events, but of the achievements of reason in this actual world. If it is possible to show that all the changes in man's ways of regarding the universe are not accidental, but necessities of thought, then there will be a philosophy of art. All the various kinds of art, and all the artists, and all the works of art will then become intelligible—not as phenomena in relation to other phenomena (in which case they are unintelligible), but as comprehended in a system of knowledge, which is not the science of an objective world, but the science of all that the mind knows about itself. This science would include not only abstract metaphysics and ethics, as sciences of what is necessary in knowledge and morality, but also a philosophy of the progress of thought in time. Part of this philosophy will be the philosophy of art, for art has made good its right to be considered as belonging to the world of thought, not to the natural world, and yet its connection with particular periods in history is something which cannot be abstracted from. If the science of thought is to be purely abstract, then there is no place for the philosophy of art. But neither will there be room for the consideration of religion, or of the

history of philosophy or of political science, because all these things imply reference to the concrete facts of time. This science of the development of thought will not be empirical, but *a priori* (if there be any meaning in *a priori*), because it begins not like ordinary science with a suspicion that there is unity somewhere, an unexplained presupposition that the universe which it explains is one universe, but with the clear knowledge that thought is the unity of the universe, and that the apparent going out of thought to an object apparently external to thought is only appearance.

Such a philosophy of art will get rid of some annoying questions. It will get rid of the question about the relation of art to morality. It will show that art has not to do either with the furthering or the hindering of the individual's moral progress. There are at least three possible cases in which art may appear to have an immoral influence. Two of these are clearly cases where it is ignorance of art that really is the misleading power. Art brings with it the possibility of bad art ; but this can hardly be made a ground of accusation against it ; in any case, ignorance or contempt of art will not make bad art less harmful. Or works of art which are pure and great in themselves may be turned to evil, because art as an image of human life includes the element of evil in it—it represents evil on the stage, or in poems. But any bad influence it may exert in this way is plainly accidental—not to be considered except by the pathologist of human nature. Or, thirdly, art though served with unselfishness and sincerity may be unfitted to be the sole end of one man's life. It may be that the practical life is not sacrificed to the theoretic or the artistic life without retribution. This is not a simple question, but whatever ethics, or casuistry, or

any other science may say to it, it is certain that art itself, and the philosophy of art, will make no claim on anyone to become less than other men before he can become an artist. What is it that makes a man moral? Not his actions, but his habitual view of things and events, and men, and himself—his living memory which makes him true to himself and to all his neighbours. The selfish man's memory is one to which the artistic or imaginative representation of things is utterly repugnant. He remembers only what has served or what has baffled him, and values the particulars of his experience only in reference to his own selfish ends. The unselfish memory remembers things and men as the artist remembers them. It values the things of experience according as they are good or bad; that is, according as they fulfil their proper end or not—not using any abstract standard of good or bad, but Plato's science of inexact things, which enables a man to find his way home, using imagination, for which each particular thing has an interest of its own, apart from any question of its use, apart from all abstract preconceptions of what ought to be. Art is the wide world's memory of things, and any man may make his own memory a sharer in its wisdom on one condition—that he shall not hate or love anything that is revealed to him there according as it thwarts or furthers his selfish purposes, but according to its own virtues or vices. The artistic imagination is part of the highest morality, because it gets rid of the last selfishness of all—the Stoic selfishness which is proud of its superiority to external things.

The philosophy of art has no other aim than to bring together as far as possible into one view all that there is in the world's memory—to make a history in which

the characters shall speak for themselves, become themselves the interpreters of the history. It will regard the artists as helping to create the mind of the ages in which they live—the mind is only what it knows and worships, and the artists are the means by which the different nations and ages come to have characters of their own.

The philosophy of art finds periods of ambition, of achievement, of criticism and barrenness, just as the biographer of any one artist distinguishes the periods in his life—the periods of youth and imitation, of manhood and originality, or the period of inspiration and the period of faultlessness, or otherwise. Only to the biographer the succession of phases in the life of his hero is more or less a matter of contingency—the philosophy of art finds the periods succeeding one another according to the necessity of thought. It does this because it has room enough to work in. The biographer finds his labour ended by the death of the man he is writing about, or perhaps the decay of his powers; but where it is the art of the world which is studied there is less of such interruption to inquiry. Decay of art can be explained because it is seen what succeeds it—what new form of intelligence takes the place of art, as Greek philosophy grew strong when Greek art began to decline from its supremacy. It can compare Greek art and Christian art, not as two independent phenomena, but as two different forms of judgment, where the first form is necessarily first and progress toward the second is inevitable.

To do this it has to consider not only art but religion and the history of philosophy, and show how the art of an age is related to the other forms of intellectual activity in that age, and how all even in their opposition

are expressions of one spirit. The history of Greek philosophy notes, as the characteristic of Greek philosophy, that it does not centre on the conception of the self with its consciousness and knowledge, opposed to an external real world, that it accepts at first the unity of thought and being and confuses clear conception with science. Greek art and Greek religion are found to be also on this level of thought. The gods are to be worshipped ; there is no disputing about the evidences of their existence ; they are accepted because they are beautiful, more beautiful than any actual thing : the thought of the worshipper is satisfied with the mere idea of the god : he does not ask for any proofs of the being of Apollo or Athena. Greek art is the most perfect of all art, because it appeals least of all to the understanding which looks for the meaning of things. Greek sculpture is not symbolic of anything. It sets up the god before the worshipper—for his contemplation, not to excite his curiosity. The Greek gods in sculpture are beautiful as they are : they do not show their power in any matter-of-fact way. That they are benefactors of mankind in any way is kept in the background, and is in no case a necessary part of their character. They are revered not as helpers, but as impersonations of what is most admirable in man. They are most strong and most beautiful, but they take little part in the earthly contests of men. Greek art is a progress from this high ideal of pure beauty to less pure, more complicated forms. The tragedy is an effort to solve the contradiction implicit in sculpture—namely the contradiction between the Olympian *power* and the Olympian *weakness*, between the freedom of the ideal and its incapacity to influence action. The drama shows the gods and heroes retaining their worshipfulness,

their divinity, and their heroism even in the entanglement of circumstances. The end of tragedy comes when it is no longer the spectacle of the action as a whole that claims the attention, but the feelings or the inner life of the hero. Then the passions are not purified as they were by the tragic pity and terror that had no weakness in them. The pathetic tragedy against which Plato wrote is part of the same movement of thought with the rise of the sophistic teaching. It is the return of mind into itself, making a universe for itself out of its own accidents. The true remedy for this is comedy, which is a revolt against pathos, and also a reaction against the elder tragedy because it finds that anything may be true of the gods and heroes to a mind robust enough of imagination. Comedy is not the private fantasy of a mind which would like to upset the universe. It is unsparing laughter at everything, even at itself. It confesses that it is not its business to preserve the heroic aspect of heroes or the divine aspect of the gods. It cannot keep anything in order. But it will waken up the sleepers who were too fond of their own dreams ; it will show them all the baseness and meanness they had shut their eyes to, and at the same time the beauty of a new heaven, with the clouds in it, and the deathless race of birds, and of a new earth with cool green places in it, and the voice of frogs to reprove the faint-hearted. Aristophanes is not the destroyer : he is the maker of a new world of art. Sculpture had made gods who were beautiful but motionless, ineffectual. Tragedy made the gods and heroes act in their proper characters, and gradually came to forget the unity of the drama and to make interesting the sorrows—not the misfortunes, but the lamentations—of the hero. Then comedy found work

to do. The pathetic tragedy had destroyed the old world of tragedy. Comedy could not bring back the old simple manner of regarding things, but it could show at least that there were other things in the world than weeping heroes. It showed that there were all sorts of things in the world and pointed them out, pretending not to know anything about the way they should be arranged, and finding nothing surprising in the co-existence of beauty and infamy. The progress of Greek art is a progress from contemplation, like that of Xenophanes when he found the secret of the universe by looking into the open heaven, to dramatic interest. It is a progress from simplicity to complication, from rest to movement, from the sameness of the statue to the contradiction of comedy. In one sense it was a decline of art. The statue is a pure work of art; the drama cannot avoid raising more questions than it can answer. But in another way it was progress. It was the invention of new beauty: the beauty of movement, of action. Thought could not rest without trying to include all things in art. The progress was from the pure beauty of the ideal, in sculpture, to the perplexed beauty of the actual world as it appears, all in confusion, in Aristophanes. It is the movement from abstract to positive thought in the sphere of art.

There is an analogous progress in all art: a progress from the art which is akin to religion to the art which is akin to science. Icelandic poetry begins with cosmogonies and theogonies. When the character of the gods is becoming settled they are represented in action and adventure. Worship of the gods is not in itself a full satisfaction of the mind: it must see characters in movement: circumstance and chance must try their

utmost against the hero. Then the god and the hero are found to be not very different from ordinary men : to have no different kind of courage from ordinary men. Then it is the actual life of men that is interesting, and with an interest far exceeding that of the stories of the gods. In this kind of art all things are interesting that are true—the horses and the ships and the hayfields, and the children that play at being men, as well as the wisdom of Njal or the high courage of Gunnar.

In the Christian art of Europe there is the same progress, only there is this difference, that the religious art which comes first is not like that of Greece or Scandinavia. The Greek poets and sculptors made the gods they worshipped, because what was clearly seen was reckoned true. Christianity belongs to a new age which has learned some things from Stoics and Sceptics—the difference between reality and appearance, and the opposition of the thinking subject to the objective world. The distinguishing mark of Christianity is that it is true in the strict historic sense. It is not a matter of imagination but of evidence. Hegel says that there could be no battle between Christ and the old gods, because they belonged to quite different spheres of thought. The Greek gods were nowhere but in the imagination. This makes a difference between Christian and Greek art from the outset. Art was all-important to Greek religion, for the god who was not clearly imagined was nothing. In the art of Christianity there is no need, no possibility that the image should accurately represent the reality. They are incommensurate from the first. The Byzantine image is not the god to be worshipped, but a symbol. Religion goes beyond art and remains beyond it, a different kind

of life for ever. The progress of Christian art is as the Greek art towards a complete conquest of the universe—to find beauty not in gods and heroes only, but in all levels of existence. It does this, however, always with the consciousness that its effort is doomed to fail, that it is less than the reality, that it is in the unseen and the spiritual that the chief beauty dwells by art. This very sense of deficiency, however, leads it to be persevering beyond all Greek art in presentation of reality, and of any atom of reality that can be made to have any artistic interest at all. And the “soothfastness” of a story comes to be part of its charm and its claim to immortality, as the Scottish poet thought.¹ So Giotto painted fewer pictures for devotion and more for the intelligence, setting down things in their reality. So Dante portrayed each man he met in Hell, Purgatory, or Paradise without regard to anything but the nature of the man before him: not being interested in anything more than in the true nature of the man, to whom the doom passed on him is an external thing. There was a separation imminent between religion and art when it was possible to treat calmly of low human things unblinded by the light of theology. There was no disappearance of religion. The Norse religion grew weak in proportion as Norse culture and art and knowledge of humanity grew. But the Christian religion was stronger than this, it could not pass away into the art. There was a separation for a time of spiritual religion from art, as there was a separation of philosophy from both. Art was left to go its own way. It ceased, as philosophy ceased, to be merely the interpreter of Christian tradition. It expressed in its own way, as philosophy expressed in its own way, the

¹ Barbour, *Bruce*, at the beginning.

idea of Christianity, that it is the individual subject which is of infinite value. The music which is the creation of the modern world expresses that which is inexpressible in all other arts—the mind's freedom from the contingency of the outward world and obedience to its own law.

XXXIV

IMAGINATION AND JUDGMENT

THE writings of the moralists are full of passages showing the vanity and the cruelty of imagination ; and the antithesis of imagination and judgment is found in ordinary use, to bring out the hazards of a particular type of mind. " Too much imagination and too little judgment "—it applies to the sanguine and optimistic man of business, to the hot-headed soldier, to all the great race of borrowers, all those who are ready to pledge their future, who believe what they wish to be true. Even the whole human race comes under this description, in many sermons on the Vanity of Human Wishes :

When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat,
Yet fool'd with hope men favour the deceit ;
Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay ;
To-morrow's falser than the former day ;
Lies worse, and while it says we shall be blest
With some new joys, cuts off what we possest.
Strange cozenage ! None would live past years again,
Yet all hope pleasure in what yet remain ;
And from the dregs of life think to receive
What the first sprightly running could not give.
I'm tired of waiting for this chymic gold,
Which fools us young, and beggars us when old.

Between the idle imagination that will not take proper account of circumstances, will not see things as they are, and the heated imagination that overestimates all values (with or without the delusive help of poetry) there are plenty of opportunities for the moralists, and there is little need for quotation. But one exceptional passage may be quoted, because it illustrates a remarkable diversion from the common track of the moralist ; a passage in which Wordsworth eloquently and fervently recites a number of cases of illustration and exaggeration, not in order to display the weaknesses of human nature, but to derive hope and encouragement from the very thought of its passions :

The history of all ages ; tumults after tumults ; wars ; foreign or civil, with short or no breathing spaces, from generation to generation ; wars—why and wherefore ? yet with courage, with perseverance, with self-sacrifice, with enthusiasm—with cruelty driving forward the cruel man from its own terrible nakedness and attracting the more benign by the accompaniment of some shadow which seems to sanctify it ; the senseless weaving and interweaving of factions—vanishing and reviving and piercing each other like the Northern Lights ; public commotions and those in the bosom of the individual ; the long calenture to which the Lover is subject ; the blast of the desert, which sweeps perennially through a frightful solitude of his own making in the mind of the Gamester ; the slowly quickening but ever quickening descent of appetite down which the Miser is propelled ; the agony and cleaving oppression of grief ; the ghostlike hauntings of shame ; the incubus of revenge ; the life distemper of ambition ; these inward existences and the visible and familiar occurrences of daily life in every town and village ; the patient curiosity and contagious acclamations of the multitude in the streets of the city and within the walls of the theatre ; a procession, or a rural dance ; a hunting, or a horse-race ; a flood, or a fire ; rejoicing and ringing of bells for an unexpected gift

of good fortune, or the coming of a foolish heir to his estate—these demonstrate incontestably that the passions of men (I mean the soul of sensibility in the heart of man) in all quarrels in all contests, in all quests, in all delights, in all employments which are either sought by men or thrust upon them—do immeasurably transcend their object.¹

This flaming sentence might easily be taken as an exposure and indictment of human frailty and folly, and there is certainly no need for any increase in the vehemence of its tone. But the moral which Wordsworth wished here to enforce is not the old one, and his vehemence is not intended as denunciation :

The true sorrow consists in this, not that the mind of man fails ; but that the course and demands of action and of life do rarely correspond with the dignity and intensity of human desires ; and hence that, which is slow to languish, is too easily turned aside and abused.

Men are ennobled, that is, by their passionate and imaginative courage and perseverance even when they may be throwing themselves away on vanities. Men are frequently stronger than sound judgment would allow them to be, says Wordsworth, in effect. The object of his political tract was to prove the importance of the Spanish ring, and he supports his case proving the motive strength of illusion. You might think that the Spaniards would see their true interest in yielding to the French ; but no ! it is just as likely, from general principles of human nature, that they will make a heroic defence against the invader. Heroism is just as natural as cowardice, passionate strength is just as natural and just as common as timidity. Passion may be either good or evil, and Wordsworth in his torrent of examples takes no pains to choose

¹ Wordsworth, *The Convention of Cintra*.

only those that are favourable. But it is at least as often good as not, and one of the influences that help to make it good is imagination. From passion and imagination other moral results may be expected than those proceeding from sound judgment; on that point all moralists are agreed; but this moralist adds that all the really good and noble things of humanity come from passion and imagination.

This is not the ordinary teaching. At the same time it is not purely schismatic doctrine; it is characteristic of the age in which he was writing. We are accustomed to hear as an historical fact that there was a great revival of imaginative power at the close of the eighteenth century, a revival shown in the works of poets and novelists. There was at the same time a good deal of theorising, more or less philosophical, about the nature of imagination, a conscious and reflective acknowledgment of the dignity of imagination, and something like a general movement to gain for imagination the respect and even more than the respect which had been usually given to prudence and sound judgment. Wordsworth and Coleridge are the principal expounders of these views, but there were others. Blake, for example: "Imagination is the real and eternal world of which this vegetable universe is but a faint shadow." Going along with this mysterious doctrine in Blake's mind is a hatred of abstractions, a love of what is concrete. The two points of view are held in turn, it will be found, by many of the chief opponents of prosaic rationalism; they are mystics for a time, but when they return from the transcendental region there is no confusion, no cloudiness about their perceptions of things; their imagination makes them see truly. So Blake, having apparently dismissed common realities under the con-

temptuous label of "this vegetable universe," goes on to show that this lofty demeanour, this transcendental imagination, goes along with the most severe and scrupulous judgment in regard to common realities :

He who would do good to another must do it in minute particulars ;

General good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite and flatterer—

For Art and Science cannot exist but in minutely organised particulars

And not in generalising demonstrations of the Rational Power :

The infinite alone resides in definite and determinate identity.

Or, one might say, in other words, Science, Art and Morality are all apt to be spoiled by abstractions, and are all alike saved by Imagination, that form of Reason which makes definite pictures in place of abstract propositions.

Blake's countryman Burke is on this side also. Though he does not make the same use of the term, it is on Imagination that Burke relies in his contest with abstract theory. What he hates is the analytic understanding, the sort of acuteness that is satisfied with partial successes, with single and separate arguments, with abstract demonstrations. What he vindicates as the true legitimate form of Reason is a kind of imaginative comprehension, in which realities are not stripped of their individual bodily life. His favourite position is that all political reasoning needs body in it, filling, substance, matter, and that precisely of the sort which cannot be generalised, which needs to be taken as it is, concretely. What the political thinker most requires is imagination. Burke does not say this in so many words, but imagination seems a fitting name for the

mode of thinking which he explains in almost every page of his works. It is an ordinary word, at any rate, for the faculty of realising to oneself in an intuitive way the meaning of what one is talking about, and it is this gift that Burke would recommend to members of Parliament. They cannot know what a Constitution is unless they know the character, temper, prejudices and aims of individual Englishmen; they must take account of the living circumstances. Political success, in Burke's view, depends on things local, domestic, particular; things that make the familiar content and colouring of life. "We begin our public affections in our families. No cold relation is a zealous citizen. We pass to our neighbourhoods and our habitual provincial connections. These are inns and resting places. Such divisions of our country as have been formed by habit, and not by the sudden jerk of authority, were so many little images of the great country in which the heart found something which it could fill."

While Burke's thinking is thus more concrete and detailed than that of the abstract politician, it is also wider and more comprehensive. It breaks the illusion of the abstract thinker by calling in the aid of definite individuals, seen clearly in their details, as with the mind of a dramatist working out his story; it also rises above the limitations of abstract thinking to the magnificent wide view of all the kingdoms of the world, the profusion of life in its course from century to century, "the great mysterious corporation of the human race." These are the two modes of his thought, and both are worth illustration.

This is the way in which he tests the sentimental English sympathy with the Jacobins. He finds the

adversary trading with the name of France—an abstraction—and he proceeds to substitute individual terms for the generality :

“ France,” says the author, “ will do this ;” “ it is in the interest of France.” “ The returning honor and generosity of France,” etc., etc. Always merely France ; just as if we were in a common political war with an old recognised member of the commonwealth of Christian Europe ;—by sleight of hand the Jacobins are clean vanished, and it is France we have got under our cup. Blessings on his soul that first invented sleep, said Don Sancho Panza the wise ! All true blessings and ten thousand times more, on him who found out abstraction, personification, and impersonals ! In certain cases they are the first of all soporifics. Terribly alarmed we should be if things were proposed to us in the *concrete*, or if fraternity was held out to us with the individuals who compose this France by their proper names and descriptions ; if we were told that it was very proper to enter into the closest bonds of amity and good correspondence with the devout, pacific and tender-hearted Sieyès, with the all-accomplished Rewbel, with the humane guillotinish of Bordeaux, Tallien and Isabeau ; with the meek butcher Legendre, and with “ the returned humanity and generosity ” (that had only been on a visit abroad) of the virtuous regicide brewer Santerre . . . But plain truth would be here shocking and absurd ; therefore comes in abstraction and personification. “ Make your peace with France.” That word *France* sounds quite as well as any other, and it conveys no idea but that of a very pleasant country and very hospitable inhabitants. Nothing absurd and shocking in amity and good correspondence with France. Permit me to say, that I am not yet well acquainted with this new-coined France, and without a careful assay, I am not willing to receive it in currency in place of the old Louis d’or.

On the other hand, leaving all minute things, Burke will speak of “ that elevation of Reason which places centuries under our eye, and brings things to the true point of comparison ; which obscures little names and

effaces the colours of little parties ; to which nothing can ascend but the spirit and moral quality of human action." And again in a passage which begins with some of Burke's characteristic freedom in the use of common terms and goes on to something like a prose version of Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*, or even like the "large utterance" of one of the older Greek philosophers :

Society is indeed a contract. Subordinate contracts for objects of mere occasional interest may be dissolved at pleasure—but the state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico, tobacco, or some such other low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest and to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties. It is to be looked on with other reverence ; because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence, of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science ; a partnership in all art ; a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection.

As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal Society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures each in their appointed place.

This is generalisation, but it is the generalisation of the artist judging the total effect, the main features, of the object he has before his mind ; it is synoptic, like the eye of the painter when he is finding the composition of a landscape, or like an author working out the right proportions of his story. Though general, it is not abstract ; the matter is still definite, though it is

regarded from a point of view that lets the subordinate differences fall out of notice.

It is not easy to find a better name than Imagination for these modes of thought ; they are imaginative in their hold upon the living particulars of experience, on the one hand, and in their lofty and comprehensive vision on the other. And they exemplify a habit of mind that has some claim to rank among the intellectual virtues, or perhaps more rightly as the highest form of practical wisdom or prudence. This kind of imagination is not opposed to judgment, it is the ground and source of right judgment, being the habit of mind which is both comprehensive and definite, both long-sighted and minute.

A sort of imagination is required for all right action, and there are few good actions but might be improved by a little more of it. May we take the name imagination to denote the power of realising what one is speaking and thinking about ? It seems a permissible and not uncommon use of the term. There is a significant piece of moralising in a remark of Gordon's among the horrors of the Chinese rebellion : " I hope to get the Shanghai people to assist, but they do not see these things." " These things " are the various abominations of famine, and one gathers that if the Shanghai people had more of imagination they would be more active in a practical way. It was this kind of imagination that Carlyle was always talking about and encouraging when he was not among the Eternal Verities ; or perhaps it would be truer to say that, as with Burke and Wordsworth, the Eternities and the Infinities put compulsion on him to look in everything for minute particulars, to see things clearly and bodily, to think himself defrauded, and to express his feelings in strong

language, when he found his authors leaving out the accessories in their story. Perhaps he expected too much from History, but there can be little question, I should think, about the value of his advice for a School of Ethics when he insists that people should do their best to realise—to “see,” in the common figurative sense—the facts with which they are concerned in theory or in practice.

The great difficulty is that ignorance is as requisite for life as knowledge ; it is not easy to discern in every case which of the two is the better. One must be content not to know most things, and to know very little about what remains ; not to reflect, not to imagine, is often not only the most comfortable, but the most virtuous course—*e.g.*, in the case of one’s grievances against other people, and in the case of all things that do not really matter. There is no need to prove the harm that may be done by the imagination when it takes the wrong turning, and magnifies everything painful and disastrous. The Self-Tormentor is an old favourite in comedy. But on the other hand the right use of imagination is little less than the very bond of human society ; and it has hardly been made enough of by the moralists. No man ever gave away to another or made allowance for him without being something of a dramatist ; dramatic imagination enters into every question of justice. How can you understand other people’s motives unless you act out a fragment or two of a play in which they are characters ? The process described in the introduction to *The Ring and the Book* is no invention of the poet’s—it is part of the common traffic of life. You find a story presented to you, with certain facts and events recorded ; you cannot at once give judgment on the meaning of it all ; you want to get

at the truth, to make the facts intelligible. There is no way but by adding something out of your imagination. You set the puppets moving in a private theatre of your own ; you invent thoughts and speeches for them ; you succeed in getting a coherent and intelligible sequence. You add an alloy, like Mr. Browning in his poem, to make the metal workable. The process may be used for an epic or a drama, but the process is known to the whole human race and is not among the privileges of men of letters merely. Most of life is spent in judging one's neighbours, and there can be no judgment good or bad without imagination. The phenomena of my neighbour, his sayings and doings, have to be put together to be interpreted. By the most rudimentary and simple minds they are dramatised, they are made to fit into an imaginary character which seems to explain them. My neighbour is a character in my novel, as fictitious as Mr. Micawber or Captain Costigan. He is a working hypothesis, made by the imagination. He may be also real in his own way, but that makes no difference to my mode of judging him.

One moral theme which the moralists have not quite exhausted is historical judgment—the estimate of characters and situations in history. It may not be of the greatest importance in the conduct of life, but it is not mere diversion. It bears upon practice and on that judgment of my neighbour which goes on from day to day, and which enters into every bargain and exchange. The graduations between a practical estimate of my neighbour and a theoretical, historical estimate of the character of Alexander the Great are not broken by any gap. The same method is used in both cases, though the materials are not the same. The value of historical problems in a School of Ethics

is, for one thing, that they bring out the peculiarities of those who judge, and give at times a cruel demonstration of their fallacies. In private cases there is seldom opportunity for thoroughly testing an opinion ; but history is more or less common ground, and if you can get a man's results on some historical question you have probably added something to the data of Ethics. It is one of the uses of history to afford materials for the moral philosopher. It sometimes provides refreshment for the scorner, in the paradoxes of historians. The grossest fallacies in this region are due no doubt to pure ignorance, as when Luther is revered by devout persons who would be pained by his tolerance of polygamy ; or as when one comes upon ardent admirers of Cromwell who believe in the essential beastliness of war. But there are fallacies also among the historians arising from defect of imagination. It is not every historian who can judge and reveal the great complex and self-contradictory minds, of which Shakespeare's Macbeth is one type, and his Henry IV. another. History is full of absurd false drawing. What is a historian to do when he comes on a personage who is at the same time magnanimous and malignant, who domineers over the weak and apologises to those who challenge him, and yet is great and dignified ? One may ask that if the historian is unable to solve the contradictions and show the character as Shakespeare can represent it, both lofty and degraded, both generous and selfish, enlightened and at the same time self-deceived, he should at least acknowledge the contradiction and state the paradox. To shrink from attacking such historical problems when they come in his way is for the historian to aid in debasing the moral currency.

Character drawing is necessary in history ; it is necessary in practice, in conduct, though it need not be formal or even articulate ; it is also convenient in reflection on conduct, in ethics. Aristotle in his character sketches is led far from the ways of philosophic research, in the direction of comedy ; he is seen feeling his way towards the methods of the novelist. He does not get quite as far as that ; his sketches are satirical rather than dramatic, and satire is generally an inferior and an easier form of description by enumeration, by means of collected notes. But satire and drama are pretty closely related, and no doubt the philosopher would have gone further if he had had time, and would have strengthened and defined more fully the lineaments of his exemplary characters. Mr. Raleigh in his history of the English Novel has shown how the old Aristotelian form of typical "characters," handed down from Theophrastus to the humorists of the seventeenth century, was modified into something less abstract and more imaginative ; the characters came down out of their cases in the ethical museum and walked about with Sir Roger de Coverley and his friends. This, no doubt, according to Aristotelian principles, is what Aristotle and nature really intended in the beginning, and all the host of imaginary persons in novels are really the supplement and realisation of the Nicomachean Ethics. Many students of the ethics have thought that what they really required to complete them was a knowledge of modern fiction.

There are other ways in which imagination comes into the matter of ethics. Wordsworth has explained them in different parts of his writings. It was not of dramatic imagination, of imagination as applied to the problems of individual character, that Wordsworth was

thinking when he made imagination into the dominant faculty by virtue of which the functions of all the other powers of mind are determined and qualified. He was thinking rather of the faculty that quickens perception, that raises the value of ordinary experience, without adding to it any fanciful or mythological decoration.

The great imaginative moralists, as it has been already remarked, show in their writings an alternation between two contrary points of view. They are at one moment high in some lofty region of contemplation among the immensities, clean out of reach of sober rationalism, at another they are down among the meanest particulars, where respectable writers of prose are equally unable to follow them. There is Blake, for instance, who is lost in his mystical tragedy of Space and Time till he reappears quite happily talking about Poplar and old Bow :

The Jew's Harp House and the Green Man,
The Ponds where boys to bathe delight,
The fields of cows by Welling's farm
Shine in Jerusalem's pleasant sight.

There is Burke, who after drawing into one view the meaning of all the centuries, will be off inventing scandalous comparisons for the liberal shepherds of the Revolution. There is Carlyle—but what need is there to illustrate by any quotation the range of Carlyle, from the silence of the Eternal Spaces down to the manners of contemporary pig-merchants on board the Irish packet? In Wordsworth there are the same extremes, and he explains the relation between them better than the other moralists.

Imagination to Wordsworth is not only poetical imagination—the faculty that is bound to express itself in verse—it is also a power that is shared by the poet

with his audience, much more common than the talent of the artist. It is not fiction, nor, in the ordinary sense, invention. If the instances are taken from the *Prelude*, in which he described from his own memory the way his imagination was influenced and taught, it will be found that most of the imaginative "visitings," to use his favourite word, are capable of being represented, literally and prosaically, as extensions of ordinary experience, or, better, as the intensifying of ordinary modes of perception. In some of his early experiences, it is true, there is what looks like a beginning of mythological invention, as when the sense of something terrible in the mountains seems to turn into the shape of vast Titanic personages :

huge and mighty forms that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

But he does not usually find this kind of suggestion in what he remembers best—the sense of the desolation of upland waters on the moors—the scene where he lay watching for the ponies that were to bring him home at Christmas :

the wind and sleety rain,
And all the business of the elements,
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
And the bleak music from that old stone wall,
The noise of wood and water, and the mist.

The moments are not regarded by Wordsworth as inventive, but it is to these that he returns for the refreshment of his imagination. What they indicate as he reflects on them is that the mind is capable of being quickened to see more of reality than it usually sees—a fragment, here and there, of what the universe may be like in the everyday perception of higher

intelligences. Hence the rest and peace of the imagination in the remembrance of these moments, because they are known to be not capricious and carnal fancies but veritable insight and attainment. There is in this sort of imagination no disabling of ordinary perception or ordinary judgment. The stone wall, the sheep, the thorn tree, remain as before good natural solid things of prose, if you choose to take them so. Only for the imagination, as it happened, they were part of an experience in which the mind was elevated, quickened, and made to know more than it is commonly able to apprehend. The mind is not left to itself in these perceptions or imaginations; its perceptions are not isolated pictures, but part of an untravelled world to which it is from time to time admitted. It is this sense of security in Wordsworth's visionary moments, the sense of not being left to his own fantasy, but of having indefinite possibilities of revelation all about his experience, that explains the relation between his poetical treatment of common matters and mystical theory recorded in *Tintern Abbey* and elsewhere. It is not only that he has something of Blake's mystical confidence that all the outward creation, Blake's "vegetable world," is equally valueless, and all capable of being transfigured, so that Islington and Marybone, the "Green Man" tavern and Welling's farm may have their places in the new Jerusalem. The weakness of this theory of Blake's is that it may be so easily imitated and degraded by anyone who chooses to make a dogma of it. Equally with its opposite, "the general good," it may be made "the plea of the hypocrite and flatterer." But Wordsworth's position is different from this and does not lend itself to imitation so easily. His belief is that the imaginative moments of which he speaks, by

bringing the mind beyond its usual limits, by giving it a view, here and there, of a more lively world than the ordinary, yet without refuting or confounding the ordinary world, lead first to a secure and tranquil frame of mind, and then, in that calm weather, to a sense of the life of the universe. So the mind attains its proper freedom, through imagination. And at the same time this religion is protected from the shallowness of the "false infinite," of the conventional vague optimism, by the difficulty and complexity of the process that leads to it. In the life of Wordsworth there may be many faults and fallacies, which the critics have sufficiently displayed, but his biography of the Imagination is without a flaw in its sincerity, and every step in it is an ordeal.

XXXV

ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

ONE of the stories in the life of Hegel tells how another philosopher asked him to "deduce his quill pen," *i.e.* to prove and justify on metaphysical grounds a particular accidental thing. The problem, it is held, was ridiculous, and showed in the other philosopher a misapprehension of the scope of philosophy. Yet when Hegel deals with history, one is reminded of this frivolous problem, and led to ask whether the Philosophy of History is not the same kind of impossibility—a deduction, a metaphysical proof, of particular contingencies, which are in their nature unreasonable. The dilemma seems to be obvious. The philosopher in dealing with history may work out a formula of progress or development; but to do this effectively and clearly must he not neglect the accidents and chances of the mortal life which is the matter of history? Or on the other hand, if he attends to particular accidents, *i.e.* if he is an historian—a reader and interpreter of the drama of history, of the unreasonable fluctuating human temperaments that make the tissue of history—he will get into serious difficulties with his formula. He may be tempted to give it up altogether, to forswear philosophy and become a mere historian.

Hegel does not shirk the difficulty, and it would be

a mistake—a mistake in history, or at any rate in biography—to dismiss his work as an abstract *a priori* construction. He has the dramatic and imaginative interest in character, will and temper, and he makes this plain at the outset in his notes on great men, choosing Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon as his instances. No imaginative writer, neither Carlyle in his *Heroes* nor Mr. Hardy in *The Dynasts*, has a stronger interest than Hegel in the persons who seem to be the most extreme contradiction to all abstract and summary formulas of history. The achievements of the men of destiny may indeed be summarised, but that sort of work, however philosophical, is not enough for Hegel. They are the instruments and vehicles of the meaning of the world, but they have an independent meaning and value of their own, besides : Caesar is Caesar still, something different from his effect in history, and Napoleon is Napoleon, as they are known roughly to common sense, and more thoroughly to the dramatic imagination.

This is one of the strong points of Hegel, an essential part of his own character, that everywhere he recognises and appreciates character, in the sense which the word has for the reader of novels and plays, and quite apart from any moralising judgment. What he admires in Dante is the distinct and individual impression made by everyone in the poem, the independence and sufficiency of each character, whatever his place and surroundings may be : like Farinata, thinking meanly of Hell :

Come avesse lo inferno in gran dispetto.

He does not reduce Shakespeare to a play of ideas, and does not wish to improve him. Ancient Pistol is good enough as he is, and Hegel laughs and applauds.

Sometimes one is inclined to think "how great a critic was in Hegel lost": he is so inspiring in his judgment of character, so sound in his policy towards Romance; his sane appreciation (like Goethe's) being quite another thing from coldness. But possibly his digressions and escapades of criticism are all the better as they are, being unprofessional and unexpected.

Dealing with historical characters, he is at some pains to put the moralist in his right place, and to show the irrelevance of moralising with regard to Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon. He does not want any sermons on the vanity of human wishes; the preacher with his commonplaces about the pitiful deaths of great men seems to Hegel only to be saying: "Look at me! Take example by me! I am not Alexander the Great; I am not ambitious; do not be Alexander! I am not Julius Caesar; he was killed in the Capitol; Brutus killed him; do not be Caesar!"

Hegel was a moralist himself, and those remarks of his bring out a great difference, which may be observed elsewhere, between the moralists who judge conduct, and the others who think mainly of character. With the former class the heroes are frequently dismissed as bad men. The second order of judges often seem to be rather antinomian if not anarchical in their sentences. Wordsworth is one of them; read what he says of Tam o' Shanter in his *Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns*, and in the same context his appreciation of the "clachan yill": "How happily does he lead his reader into that tract of sensations!" Principal Shairp, with the other standard, makes a different sort of estimate, and is pained by *The Jolly Beggars*. In the writings of Mr. Holmes, the Police Court Missionary, there is a standard of judgment which is nearer to that of Wordsworth,

and which finds an infinite variety in human beings, apart from the record of their vices. Another instance was given me lately by a friend of mine who is both historian and moralist ; the difference of opinion about that wonderful piece of Diderot's which Goethe translated, *Le Neveu de Rameau*. Rameau's nephew is a blackguard musician of genius, without a rag of decent conduct (something like the *goliardeis* in *Piers Plowman*), who is taken by Diderot to confound all respectability and pedantry by the miracle of his lively spirit. The God of the old Comedy has had few more glorious triumphs in modern times. But Lord Morley of Blackburn, who also has translated *Rameau's Nephew* in his *Diderot*, can hardly endure him, and takes the value of the piece to lie in its exposure of that corrupt world, which (in the words of a classical translator) so soon was to meet "the severe, the very severe chill of a hostile public executioner." Or, in another figure, to quote exactly : "We see the rotten material which the purifying flame of Jacobinism was soon to consume out of the land with fiery swiftness."

History has often been turned into a *Mirror for Magistrates*, or *Gesta Romanorum*, a stock of instances and illustrations with the edifying conclusion : "And this, my friends, ought to teach us !" No doubt the study of history has flourished, in a way, through this moral application of it ; the preachers give it a recognised and appreciable value. It is not a thing to be scoffed at or condemned ; many a one would be glad to know as much history as Montaigne, to read and remember Plutarch in Plutarch's own spirit ; to enjoy, on any terms whatever, such acquaintance with the lives of famous Greeks and Romans as was common in the easy old-fashioned days.

But at the same time it can hardly be denied that the moralising use of history, while it may have encouraged the study of history in one way, also tended to make it distasteful in another. It is easily degraded into mechanical rhetoric, and those who have used it best—Juvenal and Dr. Johnson—have seen this most clearly. The moral historian is too closely related to the sophist, the tutor who teaches the art of essay writing with the proper number of heads, the right openings and amplifications. History of this sort is parasitic, with no proper root of its own. One of the most notable events or changes in the eighteenth century was the abandonment of this old-fashioned way in favour of genuine history. We know Dr. Johnson's views. A conversation is reported, at dinner in Mr. Cambridge's house at Twickenham, April 18, 1775 :

"The common remark as to the utility of reading history being made: *Johnson*. 'We must consider how very little real history there is; I mean real authentic history. That certain kings reigned and certain battles were fought we can depend upon as true, but all the colouring, all the philosophy of history is conjecture.' *Boswell*. 'Then, Sir, you would reduce all history to no better than an almanac, a mere chronological series of remarkable events.' Mr. Gibbon, who must at that time have been employed upon his history, of which he published the first volume in the following year, was present, but did not step forth in defence of that species of writing. He probably did not like to trust himself with *Johnson*."

Before this (in the spring of 1772) *Johnson* had said : "There is but a shallow stream of thought in history." *Boswell*. "But surely, Sir, an historian has reflection."

Johnson. "Why, yes, Sir, and so has a cat when she catches a mouse for her kitten."

He never desired to hear of the Punic War while he lived. Mrs. Thrale asked him about "the conversation powers" of one of their acquaintance. "He talked to me at the club one day," replies our Doctor, "concerning Catiline's Conspiracy; so I withdrew my attention and thought about Tom Thumb." His use of history in the old-fashioned way is splendidly seen in the well-known passages of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*; Wolsey and Charles XII. of Sweden:

His fall was destin'd to a barren strand,
A petty fortress and a dubious hand;
He left the name at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

It is true that there is much more history in Dr. Johnson than is commonly supposed. In spite of his disparaging remarks he was willing to give advice about the reading of history. His depreciation means that he is tired of historical rhetoric and has a better ideal in his mind, and he, himself, is the author of one of the most original historical works in the language—*A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*. In ordinary history he felt the want of evidence, the uncertainty. See what he says about Robertson: "Robertson paints; but the misfortune is, you are sure he does not know the people whom he paints; so you cannot suppose a likeness." But when he gets his chance in the *Journey*, he shows himself a true historian. His account of the economic and social condition of the Highlands, the change from Status to Contract, from the patriarchal system to competition and the cash nexus, brings to mind the description of a similar change at the beginning of More's *Utopia*, and

anticipates Coleridge's *Lay Sermon* and Carlyle's *Past and Present*. This historical work of Johnson, penetrating and illuminating, is carried out in no pretentious form. The method is that of Herodotus ; it is history in the old sense of curious enquiry ; it is " Natural and Civil History," a subject of which there was formerly a Chair in the University of St. Andrews. Herodotus and Dr. Johnson understood history in that comprehensive and miscellaneous way :

" One of the birds that frequent this rock has, as we were told, its body not larger than a duck's, and yet lays eggs as large as those of a goose. This bird is by the inhabitants named a coot. That which is called coot in England is here a cooter."

" Mr. Boswell caught a cuddy. The cuddy is a fish of which I know not the philosophical name."

So Herodotus could leave the World's Debate between Europe and Asia in order to stalk the crocodile or the phoenix, and take notes about the sources of the Nile.

It is pleasant to see how Dr. Johnson in the *Journey* feels the want of that minute accuracy which in *Rasselas* he had treated as unnecessary for the poet :

" The business of a poet," said Imlac, " is to examine not the individual but the species ; to remark general properties and large appearances : he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest."

But in the *Journey* the explorer wishes he could remember things more clearly. " He who has not made the experiment, or who is not accustomed to require rigorous accuracy from himself, will scarcely believe how much a few hours take from certainty of knowledge and distinctness of imagery ; how the succession of objects will be broken, how separate parts

will be confused, and how many particular features and discriminations will be compressed and conglobated into one gross and general idea." And it was the despiser of history who wrote the famous passage on historical associations: the patriotism of Marathon, the piety of Iona.

Johnson's *Journey* is a proof that the historical instinct and genius may be latent and unsuspected, and may be brought out almost accidentally, by the mere impulse of curiosity, the old wanderer's motive, to see new lands and learn the manners of other men. Dr. Johnson's historical raid is a thing that makes the pomp of methodical historians ridiculous. This picture of the meeting of two ages in the Highlands—the old traditional clan system and the economics of the nineteenth century—is drawn apparently by a casual observer untrained in any historical school. But we know Dr. Johnson's own Spanish proverb: "He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry the wealth of the Indies with him"; and we see that he had been storing up all his life for this adventure. *Ne fait pas ce tour qui veut*. The moral seems to be that history needs no justification, and that Herodotus is never out of date; the motive of history is that impulse, stronger than prudence, which takes Ulysses and his companions out through the pillars of Hercules:

"Our eyes are wakeful only for a little space; let us win for them a sight of the unpeopled world, South of the Sun." ¹

¹ O frati, dissi, che per cento milia
Perigli siete giunti all' occidente,
A questa tanto picciola vigilia
De' vostri sensi ch' è del rimanente,
Non vogliate negar l' esperienza
Diretro al sol del mondo senza gente.

Dante, *Inf.* xxvi. 112.

If one is to make a fair estimate of Johnson's talent for history, his political essays should not be forgotten, with their scornful insight: "how is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?" And his latest work is historical: the *Lives of the Poets*.

All these things are a long way from the moral application of history, the examples of the vanity of human wishes. But they do not efface the difference between Johnson and Gibbon. Johnson's good sense, his keenness and curiosity, may be turned to history, as we have seen; but he has not the frame of history as it disclosed itself to Gibbon or to Burke, the idea, more or less vague, of a general continuous life, of historical progress. It is this new fashion of regarding history that makes the second half of the eighteenth century so different from the first. There is an implicit philosophy of history in every modern historian, even when like Gibbon or Macaulay he may seem for the time to have no interest beyond the narrative. At any rate it may be said that the idea of a continuous impersonal life is necessary to the story of the Roman Empire or of England, and this vague conception is on the way to become philosophical; it calls for philosophical criticism to determine what is implied, in such terms as "national life" or the "spirit of the age."

Historians are naturally inclined to be suspicious or unrespectful about the philosophy of history. They regard it as an amateurish and, at the same time, pretentious way of cutting the difficulties. What there is good in it is history; what is not history in it is superfluous. This opinion is not unreasonable. The short cuts in history are many of them deceptive and

unprofitable. Taine "deduced" the English genius from the English mutton; and therefore is thought by some to have had a philosophy of history. Hegel is full of historical good things, like his description of the Middle Ages; but is their goodness beyond the reach of the historian, does it need philosophy? As in his remarks on heroes, already quoted, Hegel seems often to be working as a man of letters, using imagination and common sense, without any metaphysics at all. In many of his lectures, especially on the Philosophy of Art, he appears to be escaping from metaphysics, and giving his hearers criticism and history: the results of his reading in the *Nibelungen* or the ballads of the Cid, his impressions of Shakespeare or Cervantes.

In this place, I remember how Edward Caird seemed to be glad when he came to the Papacy and the Empire in the notes which, in my time, in the Moral Philosophy Class, followed the lectures on Greek Philosophy and led on to the moderns, Descartes and Spinoza. Those historical notes were a surprise to many of his hearers, a new sort of interest; and I imagine that Hegel also was unscrupulous, and gave his people a good deal of history because he liked it, without trying too hard at every point to insist on the philosophy. The Philosophy of History has the same place in his works as the *Critias* of Plato, after the *Republic* and *Timaeus*. The Theory of Justice and the Theory of Nature are followed by the story which shows the adventures of Justice in space and time. There are many things besides philosophy in Plato's story of Atlantis, and the same sort of freedom may be allowed to Hegel.

One might ask whether Hegel's scheme of history is a thing beyond the reach of ordinary historical

method, whether it really needs metaphysics to invent or explain it. The conception of Freedom as the end of all historical progress can be made intelligible without the heavy philosophic apparatus ; and the shifting of the historical centre from Greece to Rome, from the Empire to the modern national state (*e.g.* Prussia), so far from being new or paradoxical belongs to the oldest type of historical commonplaces, such, for instance, as is explained in Sir David Lyndsay's *Monarchie*, the succession of empires, Chaldee, Persian, Greek and Roman—the theory derived from the book of Daniel, which is, as Dr. Driver describes it, “ a religious philosophy of history.” If Prussia, with Hegel, takes the place of the Fifth Monarchy, we may note the fact and perhaps draw inferences, without obscuring the likeness of the younger to the older doctrine.

The Philosophy of History may be a work of mixed origin ; partly philosophy and partly the native genius of a great improviser.

But there is another set of Hegel's lectures where he proves himself philosopher and historian in one. About the historic value of Hegel's *History of Philosophy* there can be no question. No one who has read those lectures can ever fall back into the state of mind that was possible before they were delivered. Here is history, “ the record of change ” ; and here the change is a movement of thought under its own laws ; the historical succession is a process of logic.

Now if the merely human and temporal relation of Plato and Aristotle, of Spinoza and Leibnitz, can be truly represented in another sphere by the logical sequence of their theories in the history of philosophy, it is at least possible that the much more complex and accidental fabric of ordinary history may be

explicable as a process of thought ; and this will be the Philosophy of History.

An ideal explanation is not necessarily bad science. Goethe explained the metamorphosis of Plants by reference to a sort of Platonic idea of the absolute plant ; he saw in the light of this idea that the Flower and all the parts of the Flower are modifications of the Leaf. I understand that this metaphysical theory is still accepted by positive botanists. And in history the power of ideas is not to be denied merely because it is difficult to explain the operation of large impersonal causes. It is possible, of course, to make large and imposing formulas do the duty of explanation. This easy process of fallacy is not to be encouraged. But it is another thing to say that because the " Spirit of the Age " and such branches of learning are sometimes unlawfully invoked, therefore there is to be a law, a statute of *Praemunire*, against all recourse to ideal explanations.

Every age has its own fashion, and this is determined by habits of thought, which can be shown to follow their own law. The movement of the world, the progress of thought from one age to another, may be proved and tested often as thoroughly as the history of individual lives.

The histories of literature and art are sometimes depreciated by political historians—" poor despised trades," as the plumber said to the schoolmaster. Those who take Seeley's view—now prevalent in the schools—that the business of history is politics, will, of course, regard those other histories as at best merely subsidiary—ancillary sciences, *Hülfswissenschaften*. But as their matter is itself intellectual, so the changes which they record (one would suppose) must be under

some laws of intelligence, and if the changes of literary or artistic fashion correspond to political changes, then the political changes—the matter of ordinary history—must be to some extent under the same intellectual law.

The history of art—the history of literature may be included in it or taken along with it—has one great disadvantage which may partly account for the low opinion held of it by most regular historians. The ordinary historian is not so much exposed to be confronted and outfaced by his subject. His subject is all in the past, and much of his matter is only half articulate. But the historian of art is dealing with things present and alive, and things whose nature it is to be intelligible. Statesmen and generals are past and gone, and cannot resent their treatment by the historian; but when the historian is talking about Rembrandt and Milton, he can never be quite safe. Rembrandt and Milton may walk in at any moment, and put out his little light.

Without attempting to explain them, I mention some things that are made definite by the history of literature, with some bearing on political history.

The Teutonic “wandering of the peoples,” the migrations and conquests of Goths, Burgundians, Franks, and Northmen are seen in literature to be accompanied, in the tumult of the Dark Ages and through all the confusion of Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Teutonic elements, by the progress of a distinctly Northern type of civilisation, the proof of which is in the scanty remains of old Teutonic poetry—so different in their peculiar elaborate art from that which follows in the next great medieval period, when the new Latin languages—French and Provençal first—are

the instruments of the ruling fashion in Christendom. The change is about 1100, the time of the first Crusade ; it coincides with a change in the type of the Teutonic languages, from the " Old " to the " Middle " stage, so called, and with a general submission of the Teutonic literatures—High and Low Dutch, English, Danish—to the sway of the Romance dictators. This, and not the classical renaissance, is the beginning of modern poetry ; there is an unbroken succession from the early Provençal to the first Italian poets, then to Dante and Petrarch, and so to Ariosto, Ronsard and Spenser—the new Renaissance ideas taking up and carrying on what had begun before 1100, before the first extant Provençal songs. That is a rough summary of part of the literary history which, at least, gives clearness to one's view of the difference between the earlier and the later Middle Ages, and security against the common prejudice of the Renaissance. Without this, the perspective of medieval history will go wrong ; for there is little in the political record to bring out that wonderful early Teutonic growth and culmination, that Homeric age of the North. It is through literature, also, that the Irish get their proper place in relation to the rest of Europe. More in detail, many things might be brought out by a comparison of literary and political history.

One of the most difficult of all periods is the fifteenth century : the Middle Ages were an unconscionable time in dying, and the spectacle is tedious. The exhaustion of the Middle Ages is described by Gaston Paris in the introductory part of his little book on *Villon* ; the emptiness of the classical renaissance is shown in a few pages (*Réflexions sur le Quattrocento*) by one of his most eminent scholars, Mr. Alfred Jeanroy ; and those two complementary essays, if one takes them together, will

not be without their effect on the political history of France and Italy. How much of the history of the world is included in Rabelais, the hope, the freedom of the new age, the ambition, the glory, the triumph of the Will!—and attending on Rabelais, the narrow clear mind of George Buchanan, with his unshaken faith in Latin verse, and at the same time the utter want of chivalry which was one common effect of the classic revival. For it is not every great clerk who is worthy to be admitted to the Abbey of Thelema, where the rule is freedom, and freedom means honour.

To take some other examples, does not Mr. Saintsbury's *History of Criticism* do something to explain the history of the world at large—if it were only by showing how vast an amount of time and labour has been spent by the human race in the cultivation of formal rhetoric? And Rutherford's *Chapter in the History of Annotation* has the same sort of effect, in its anatomy and physiology of the Commentator. The history of ways of thinking—not only of philosophy, but of criticism and commentary—is a key to political history as well.

The great objection to philosophies of history is that they seem to differ little from summaries of history, which may be better made by the historian than the philosopher. On the other hand, summaries well made, like Freeman's General Sketch or Gardiner's outline of English History, may have great philosophical value merely because they are synoptic, and keep in view the continuous life of Europe or of England as if it were one person.

But the summary, however philosophical, is unsatisfying. It chooses certain things—countries and heroes and tendencies and aspects—for promotion, and leaves out others. Many things are interesting and

important for the historian and the humanities which are not in the main line of march. The most philosophical of modern histories—Sars's *Norway*—describes the life of a country which lost its rank among the nations in October 1263. Iceland never was a State at all, in the strict sense of the term. Yet the early history of Norway and Iceland, on account of the genius of the people, is valuable out of all proportion to the place of these countries in the political community of Europe. The Orkneys in the twelfth century, just because the story of the Earls (*Jarla Saga*, *Orkneyinga Saga*) was written by some person of spirit and imagination, are still to be seen and understood in a light that seldom falls on any of the more important lands.

The other day Mr. Nicholson's *Literary History of the Arabs* achieved what most people would have thought impossible, capturing readers who understand nothing of Arabic, and making them interested in the lives of writers whom they can never know, and the fortunes of a nation with which they have never been concerned. In ways like these, the historians make their appeal in the name of the humanities against the formula of progress. Progress, whatever it may be, does not refute or disannul what once has been, so long as the historian has a chance of recovering and interpreting it. History is "the record of change"; it is also something more. It is the province of one of the Muses, and of Mnemosyne, their mother, in whose presence it is not becoming to speak of the *utility* of history. Discussion of the advantages to be found in noble things is seldom edifying or cheerful. The practical uses of history may be proved, no doubt, but not its true value :

For nothing worthy proving can be proven.

If ever the philosophy of history were complete, the historian would still be undismayed. There are other things for him to do ; he might perhaps attend to the history of Ireland, which has probably escaped the notice of the philosopher. The justification of history, if it wants any, may be found in the *Journey to the Western Islands*, and in the last voyage of Ulysses :

Considerate la vostra semenza :
 Fatti non foste a viver come i bruti,
 Ma per seguir virtute e conoscenza.

Adventure is the motive. And if we may judge from the freedom of some of his casual remarks, the adventurers will find Hegel ready to be of their company and to join in all fresh discoveries. He had faith in the real world.

XXXVI

ALLEGORY AND MYTH

DANTE is more given to analytical reasoning than any other poet : what seems at first most alien to poetry, the process of analytical division and explanation, accompanies his poems from the *Vita Nuova* to the *Paradiso*. But he cannot, any more than the most prosaic scholiast, make analysis do the work of poetry, or even explain it, and his account of allegory, in the letter to Can Grande, leaves out the main thing. Compare the prose interpretation of the Psalm *In exitu Israel* with the same phrase as it is sung in the celestial ship at the beginning of *Purgatorio*. The allegory is the same in poetry as in prose ; only in the poem the double reference which is part of the nature of allegory is absorbed in the one real meaning. *In exitu Israel de Ægypto* is not a text to be explained tropologically ; it is the song of the redeemed, and they are what they sing. Imaginative and poetical allegory is a different thing from the common allegorical interpretation of Scripture ; but there are no convenient words to express the differences.

Poetical allegory has a way of turning into poetical reality ; the image into the thing itself. The psalm *In convertendo Dominus* is not surpassed even by Dante in the transcendent beauty of its change from allegory

to direct utterance: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, then were we like unto men that dream." You take this, rightly, for a song of triumph, but the triumph is verily a dream, a thought, a hope: and the true passion of the Church, not yet triumphant, is heard breaking through the dream: "Lord, turn again our captivity as streams in the South!"

Much of the allegory in Dante's poetry is of this sort; reality breaking through and sweeping away the imagery. In *Piers Plowman* and the *Pilgrim's Progress* likewise, often, what we find is not an allegorical pilgrimage, but a true story. Dante's vision of eternal life in the *Paradiso* makes use of allegory, like other figures of speech, but the main argument is what he believed without any figure. He has nothing in verse or prose at all like the conventional epic allegory which descended from the medieval moralisations of Ovid to Tasso, who wrote an allegorical interpretation of his *Gerusalemme liberata*; to Pope, who adopted one ready-made for his *Iliad*.

It is not easy always to distinguish allegory from myth. Myth was allegory for the readers of *Ovid Moralised*, the popular old French book which was not quite antiquated in the days of Rabelais. In a different way passages of mythology, like Narcissus or the spear of Peleus, became part of the tradition of the lyrical "courtly makers," used in similes and comparisons, not strictly allegorical. Dante in his copious use of mythology does not stop to interpret allegorically. He does not point out that Cain is historical (*Purg.* xiv. 133) and Aglaurus not so (*ibid.* 139), if indeed he thought of any such difference. That he was not careless about historical truth appears curiously in *Monarchia*, iii. 9, where the allegorical interpretation of

Peter's two swords, which did not suit Dante's theory, is rejected in favour of plain historical fact. "Peter, as usual, answered without thinking of any deeper meaning."—"Dicunt enim illos duos gladios quos adsignaverit Petrus duo praefata regimina importare : quod omnino negandum est, tum quia illa responsio non fuisset ad intentionem Christi, tum quia Petrus, de more, subito respondebat ad rerum superficiem tantum."

Dante here, of course, had a particular motive for preferring the literal sense, but that does not spoil the force of this example, which shows clearly that his mind was not confused, as so many were, by tropological interpretations, to the point of not caring whether historical fact were fact or not.

With regard to Apollo and the other gods, he did not raise any question of historic truth or falsehood. He accepts what Jupiter said to Mercury in the *Aeneid* as evidence of the destiny of Rome. He does not encourage the common theory of the ancient gods, that they were fiends deceiving the people through oracles. He thinks more nobly of Apollo, though the other theory had been taught by St. Augustine, and was popularly current in *Ovide Moralisé*, and other books.

In certain most miraculous works of modern poetry, in Collins's *Ode to Evening*, in Keats's *Autumn*, there is mythological imagination, personifying, and at the same time keeping what may be called the truth of ordinary experience. Wordsworth goes beyond this in his *Ode to Duty*: "Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong": no figurative imagination, but vision of the law of the world. Dante thinks in the same way of Fortune (*Inf.* vii.), so intensely that he sees her as a goddess, turning her sphere in like manner as the

Intelligences move the spheres of the planets. There is nothing like this anywhere else in his verse or prose ; nowhere else does allegory or mythology turn into the revelation of an unknown deity. Nowhere else in Dante is there more clearly the accent of true worship than in Virgil's defence of Fortune :

Quest' è colei ch' è tanto posta in croce
Pur da color che le dovrian dar lode,
Dandole biasmo a torto e mala voce.
Ma ella s' è beata e ciò non ode :
Con l' altre prime creature lieta
Volve sua spera, e beata si gode.

Words like allegory and mythology fail utterly to describe this poetical mode of imagination, yet both are required when one thinks of this passage, though it is as far removed as Wordsworth's " brave trans-lunary things " from the common fashion of allegory.

XXXVII

ROMANCE

THE eighteenth century is generally supposed to have been anti-romantic in literature, through the revolution in taste which is described by Hurd in his *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) :

Henceforth, the taste of wit and poetry took a new turn, and the Muse who had wandered so long in the world of fiction was now constrained against her will—

To stoop with disenchanted wings to truth,
as Sir John Denham somewhere expresses her present enforced state, not unhappily. What we have gotten by this revolution, you will say, is a great deal of good sense. What we have lost is a world of fine fabling.

It could not be put better than this, the difference between the two ages—Spenser and Pope. It is an historical judgment that really describes a real difference, and the judgment is all the more significant because it is uttered by a man who is living in the middle of what he describes, who belongs as an eighteenth-century literary man to a world of good sense—a world which is thus conscious of itself, and able to describe itself. What Hurd says in the lifetime of Dr. Johnson could not be improved by anyone writing in a later

age with all the opportunities for comparison and revision of judgment that are afforded by later revolutions in taste. Hurd is one of the chief advocates of the *Faerie Queene* in the eighteenth century ; one of those who were not quite satisfied with good sense. His *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* are a protest against the restriction of poetry, a claim for freedom, a justification of the things which were popularly condemned as Gothic and fanciful. His protest throughout is delightfully written, and full of good sayings and good temper. It is not extravagant or effusive ; it is all the more telling as a proof of the literary reaction against common sense. Here is a very reasonable man, no anarchist or revolutionary, writing in elegant language to defend the miraculous things in Ariosto, Tasso and Spenser. " The Fairy tales of Tasso do him more honour than what are called the more natural, that is the classical, parts of his poem. We make a shift to run over the passages he has copied from Virgil. We are all on fire amidst the magical feats of Ismen, and the enchantments of Armida."

Hurd, of course, could not have written as he did if he had been alone in his taste. He was writing on behalf of many unknown readers, who agreed with him. There was a strong romantic tradition in the eighteenth century, though it is not the main influence and does not give its character to the literature of the time. " The fictions of the Gothic romances are not so remote from credibility as is commonly supposed," said Dr. Johnson ; he amused himself in Skye by thinking of his long days in the saddle or at sea, as the journey of a knight errant who finds entertainment, at the end of his day, in some gracious gentle house at Raasay or Dunvegan.

Dr. Johnson was fond of old romances, and so no doubt were other people in his time, and many other people who did not share this taste had at one time shared it, had wandered like Milton in the fables of chivalry, had at any rate in the nursery, like Steele's young friend, passed from the fiction of Æsop's Fables to the history of Belianis of Greece and the Seven Champions of Christendom.¹ Wordsworth, like Dr. Johnson, had much more reading than he ever turned to use in his own works, and Wordsworth gives evidence about the vogue of old romances in his own early days. He has nothing but gratitude for them, and he cannot bear to see them displaced by the crude new educational substitutes which are provided by modern progress and the march of intellect :

Oh ! give us once again the wishing cap
Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat
Of Jack the Giant-Killer, Robin Hood,
And Sabra in the forest with St. George !

Now if one puts together Hurd's remark—" We have lost a world of fine fabling "—with Wordsworth's

¹ " —a great Master of all the Learning on t'other Side Eight Years old. I perceived him a very great Historian in Æsop's Fables: But he frankly declared to me his mind, that he did not delight in that learning, because he did not believe they were true ; for which reason I found that he had very much turned his studies for about a twelvemonth past into the Lives and Adventures of Don Bellianis of Greece, Guy of Warwick, the Seven Champions, and other historians of that age. . . . He would tell you the mismanagements of John Hickathrift, find fault with the passionate temper in Bevis of Southampton, and loved St. George for being the champion of England ; and by this means had his thoughts insensibly moulded into the notions of discretion, virtue, and honour. I was extolling his accomplishments when the mother told me that the little girl who led me in this morning was in her way a better scholar than he : ' Betty ' (says she) ' deals chiefly in Fairies and Sprights, and sometimes in a winter night will terrify the maids with her accounts till they are afraid to go up to bed.' " *Tatler* No. 95. (Steele).

complaint against the modern educator, a rather unexpected result may appear. Hurd means that the change of taste (we may call it "eighteenth century," though of course it began before that) expelled romance from poetry, and did harm to poetry by confining it in range and method. Wordsworth, writing early in the nineteenth century, finds that whatever may be the fortune of poetry the common prose children of England are being defrauded of their inheritance; their allowance of fairy tales is stopped. The result, when these two statements are put together, is this: that the eighteenth century, which generally did without romance in its literature, kept up the supply of romance for its children, and at least allowed the reading of romance to its grown men; while the nineteenth century, coming in with a great romantic revolution in literature, cuts off the tradition of romance among simpler un-literary people, takes away the *Seven Champions* from the schoolboy and the ballads from the country-side—at the same time that motives of romance are being sought for everywhere by literary artists for their own purposes.

Few revolutions or general changes of habit have been more important than that which cut off the old romantic popular traditions of folk-lore and ballads in the nineteenth century, and put modern educational text-books in their place. This means a change in the minds of modern civilised human beings, making them unlike all their ancestors. They learn nothing now in the way that all generations, including those of the enlightened eighteenth century, learned their ballads and fairy stories. These things may come to them by way of books; they do not come as part of their real life, from the mouth of their nurse or grandmother;

and so the child is taken away from his native earth and his home, and is turned into an abstract educational product, owing the contents of his mind to school-masters. In the nineteenth century almost everywhere the old immemorial traditions of popular romance have withered up. The shepherds of Ettrick and Liddesdale know nothing of the old ballads, or know them only as any foreigner might know the *Border Minstrelsy*, out of books. The Fairy Tales that once were English are known now mostly through Grimm, where they are known at all. Every child knows the *Travelling Companion*, which was Peele's *Old Wives' Tale*, but they know it from Hans Andersen, not from their grandmothers.

The appetite for romance has always been strong, even in the most reasonable and scientific ages. The eighteenth century was fairly well supplied; it had, as Dr. Johnson proves, the old books of chivalry, it had the *Arabian Nights*, it had the *Orlando* and the *Faerie Queene*. The favourite reading of Edward Waverley in his boyhood was that of Charles James Fox through all his life. But the craving was unsatisfied; there were not enough new stories. We know more or less how the fashion changed again; how literary good sense went down in value, how Macpherson's Ossian triumphed and took captive some of the strongest minds in Europe.

Peacock has described the new fashions in the essay which provoked Shelley to his *Defence of Poetry* :

Mr. Scott digs up the poachers and cattle-stealers of the ancient border. Lord Byron cruises for thieves and pirates on the shores of the Morea and among the Greek islands. Mr. Southey wades through ponderous volumes of travels and old chronicles, from which he carefully selects all that is false, useless, and absurd, as being essentially

poetical ; and when he has a commonplace book full of monstrosities, strings them into an epic. Mr. Wordsworth picks up village legends from old women and sextons ; and Mr. Coleridge to the valuable information derived from similar sources superadds the dreams of crazy theologians and the mysticisms of German metaphysics, and favours the world with visions in verse in which the quadruple elements of sexton, old woman, Jeremy Taylor, and Emanuel Kant, are harmonised into a delicious poetical compound.

In this revolution one is often amazed at the feebleness of the victors, the disproportion between the trifling interest of the *Castle of Otranto* and its immense success—or between the present value of Macpherson and the praise of Ossian in Goethe's *Werther*. Among the strange things in history is the relation of Monk Lewis and Scott. The tales of Terror and Wonder are mostly trash :

Not long lived the Baron and none since that time
 To inhabit the castle presume,
 For chroniclers tell that by order sublime
 There Imogene suffers the pain of her crime
 And mourns her deplorable doom.

At midnight four times in the year does her sprite,
 When mortals in slumber are bound,
 Arrayed in her bridal apparel of white
 Appear in the hall with the skeleton-knight,
 And shriek as he whirls her around.

While they drink out of skulls newly torn from the grave,
 Dancing round them pale spectres are seen ;
 Their liquor is blood, and this horrible stave
 They howl : " To the health of Alonzo the brave
 And his consort the False Imogene ! "

This verse Coleridge says " has an effect not unlike that of galloping over a paved road in a German stage-waggon without springs." But he thinks *Alonzo and Imogene* worth mentioning.

The appetite was so strong that almost anything with a touch of romance was welcome. "Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine, and Horrid Mysteries. Those will last us some time." The evidence of Miss Austen is not to be refused.

Those who provided the "horrid mysteries" were often clear enough in their own mind as to their value. Lewis parodies his own romance, and adds to his *Tales of Wonder* a satirical ballad which, to use "a selection from the language spoken among men," gives the whole thing away. Smedley's Ghost speaks (out of the *Dunciad*):

Ah ! knew'st thou in the happier days
How smooth the way to fame,
That now e'en D—r—n wears the bays,
E'en Kn—t acquires a name :

Thyself would leave the hackneyed themes
That Pope, that Dryden tired ;
Thyself indulge in German dreams
By great Goethe inspired.

Loves not Invention ever young
The Weser's golden strand ?
Has not the harp wild genius strung
In Schiller's magic hand ?

O come with foreign fable fraught
And weave the Runic rhyme,
Drink as I drank the siren draught
In Thames' congenial slime.

Though first the nymph thou hast not led
From Danube's parent shore,
Still may'st thou to the tuneful dead
Add one dull Briton more.

The truth seems to be that all romantic revivals are followed by crowds of impostors ; sham romance

appears to be easy ; it has often been profitable. It is found in many different periods, and the explorer who goes back into the Middle Ages to get the genuine thing will too often find only the ancestors of Monk Lewis—mechanical contrivers, professional dealers of more or less ingenuity and various degrees of dullness. Oberon in *Huon of Bordeaux* is a son of Julius Caesar and Fata Morgana, and that is a type of the incongruous things to be found in the old romantic schools. A great philologist has told me how, in his youth, he was drawn to read *William and the Werwolf* ; the title was promising. But the result was so disappointing that he gave up romance and took to the study of Middle English. There are similar cases of disappointment to be confessed by those whom Carlyle once led to his German romantic authors.

Where is true romance ? Where is it, the *blaue Blume* ? Where is the island of Bimini ? It is not to be found where the professional agents of the romantic schools have “ opened up the country.” The fashionable romance of the twelfth century has little more of the true magic than Macpherson or the German work that followed him ; the “ horrid mysteries ” of the Elizabethan drama often fail as grievously as the emphasis of Manfred or Hernani, in comparison with what one knows for the true test of romance, the spell of the *Ancient Mariner* or some of the old ballads, *The Widow's Sons*, *The Milldams of Binnorie*—or let us say, to the due honour of the despised rationalist eighteenth century, the magic of the *Castle of Indolence* :

Full in the passage of the vale above
A sable silent solemn forest stood,
Where nought but shadowy forms were seen to move,
As Idless fancied in her dreaming mood ;

And up the hills on either side a wood
Of blackening pines aye waving to and fro
Sent forth a sleepy horror through the blood,
And where the valley winded out below,
The murmuring main was heard and scarcely heard
to flow.

Many a reader of romance has fared badly and returned in depression like the gentleman who went in the twelfth century to look for the marvels of the forest of Broceliande :

A fool I went, a fool I came,
Folly I sought, and mine the blame.

Is the magic world anywhere to be found ? One good rule in this as in other holiday explorations is to do without the organisers of traffic as far as possible. Romance is often near its best with authors who are not thinking about it, or who think other things more important ; with Homer, and with Dante, who like Dr. Johnson was a reader of books of chivalry, but did not imitate them directly. The romance that springs up along with the graver intentions of Dante and Milton is often more worth than the deliberate romance of Ovid or Ariosto.

Then, quite at the other side and far away from the great poets, are the anonymous authors of ballads and tellers of folk-lore stories, and along with these I would put some authors who have the gift of bringing back the charm of a winter's tale to stories that have been sophisticated or overdressed by professional literary men. I think particularly of the old Italian writer from whom Tennyson took the *Lady of Shalott* ; I think of the beautiful Welsh prose stories of *Peredur* and the *Lady of the Fountain* and *Geraint and Enid*—stories recovered from the French and restored from the verse

of the fashionable French poet—admirable in its own way—to a simpler and more effective form.

It would be a great mistake to think of popular folklore fairy tales as containing no more than the *matter* of romance—plots and adventures that may serve an ambitious poet and be turned into a noble form of poetry in the *Odyssey*. This no doubt is one of the uses of fairy tales ; to be the matter for successive poets, from Homer onwards. But they are not mere material ; and one language differs from another in the fashion of its fairy tales. We know how easy it is for tradition to go wrong, to mix and deface and mangle stories. Yet often we find stories surviving unimpaired, with the unities preserved, taking different shapes, all good and sound, in different countries—like that of the *Travelling Companion*, which is better and fresher in a West Irish traditional version, written down in the nineteenth century, than in many of the older medieval literary renderings. It is enough to compare Dr. Hyde's Irish stories or Campbell's *Tales of the West Highlands* with Grimm or with Dasent's *Tales from the Norse*, to see how much variety of style and what admirable form there may be in traditional stories.

I take one example which is the more remarkable because it gives an incident that comes at the beginning of *Percival* and may be compared with *Peredur* and the other versions of that story by those who are interested specially in such things.

This that I am going to quote is not from a variant of *Percival*, though it has some resemblances in detail ; it is the opening of the story of *The Knight of the Red Shield* in Campbell of Islay's second volume :

There was before now a king of Eirinn and he went himself and his people and his warriors and his nobles and

his great gentles to the hill of hunting and game. They sat on a hillock coloured green colour, where the sun would rise early and where she would set late. Said the one of swifter mouth than the rest: "Who now in the four brown quarters of the universe would have the heart to put an affront and disgrace on the King of Eirinn, and he in the midst of the people and the warriors, great gentles and nobles of his realm?"

"Are ye not silly," said the king; "he might come, one who should put an affront and disgrace on me, and that ye could not pluck the worst hair in his beard out of it."

It was thus it was. They saw the shadow of a shower coming from the western airt and going to the eastern airt, and the rider of a black filly coming cheerily after it. (Here follows one of the ornamental rhetorical amplifications which are common in the Gaelic; unnecessary for the story.)

Then he spoke to them in the understanding quieting truly wise words of real knowledge; and before there was any more talk between them he put over the fist, and he struck the king between the mouth and the nose, and he drove out three of his teeth, and he caught them in his fist, and he put them in his pouch, and he went away.

"Did not I say to you," said the king, "that one might come who should put an affront and disgrace on me, and that you could not pluck the worst hair in his beard out of it?"

Let me quote another passage of romance from another Gaelic story, the voyage of Mael Duin. Its translator, Mr. Whitley Stokes (many thanks to him for that and many other good gifts to the lovers of stories), has noted this as having the "natural magic" of which Mr. Arnold spoke in his *Lectures on Celtic Literature*:

Thereafter they voyaged till they found a great silvern column. It had four sides, and the width of each of these sides was two oarstrokes of the boat, so that in its whole circumference there were eight oarstrokes of the boat. And not a single sod of earth was about it, but only the

boundless ocean. And they saw not how its base was below nor how its summit was above. Out of its summit came a silvern net far away from it; and the boat went under sail through a mesh of that net.

And then they heard a voice from the summit of yonder pillar, mighty, and clear, and distinct. But they knew not the tongue it spake, nor the words it uttered.

Sometimes one is inclined to think that Romance, like Happiness, is "there where thou art not"; if it were real, would it be romance? Is it not all vague, impalpable—less true to its own nature in the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which is a complete and reasonable thing, than in the music of *Kubla Khan*? It is strange how often it seems to spring up in the most unlikely ground, in burlesque even, like the *Castle of Indolence*, or in satire, like the *Vision of Judgement*. But perhaps one ought not to be led away like this by the magic of the artists who play with shadowy recollections, who show the landscape of romance, as in the *Castle of Indolence*, but never tell the story, who evoke the form of it, as in *Kubla Khan*, and leave the matter, a *caput mortuum*, to be thrown away. Sometimes one is inclined to take *Romance* as a name for the most subtle spirit of imagination, for the quintessence of poetry; and this may be right. But it is too difficult, for the present purpose at any rate, and there are other meanings of the word and other considerations which may be dealt with more familiarly; I come back to plainer ground.

Though it is true that the story-tellers are often disappointing, yet the poor stories, even those ridiculed in *Sir Thopas* and *Don Quixote*, have their value and an important place in history. Many of them seem only fit for puppet-shows, like that of Don Gayferos; but the puppet-shows and chapbooks, the beggar

minstrels and reciters, have had a great deal to do with the making of people's minds. The uses of romance—in its ruder form we need not scruple to consider what is the use of it—may be seen most beautifully in the passage of Barbour's *Bruce* where the good King Robert takes the romance of *Ferumbras* to amuse his people on the shore of Loch Lomond, while the slow ferryboat works to and fro bringing the rest of the party across :

The king the quhilis meryly
 Red to thaim that war him by
 Romanys of worthi Ferambrace
 That worthily our-cummyn was
 Throw the rycht douchty Olywer.

The gud king upon this maner
 Comfortyt thaim that war him ner ;
 And maid thaim gamyn and solace
 Till that his folk all passyt was.

I bought a copy of the same story as a chapbook in Madrid, and think there must be something in it to have lasted so long. In Italy you may still find *I Reali di Francia* on bookstalls, alongside of the realists of France, and you may remember the old story of the man found weeping in an Italian market-place because he had just heard from a reciter the news of the death of Roland. It was from tastes and interests of that sort that the *Orlando* grew to its poetical form with Boiardo and Ariosto ; and so the old Italian audiences and the story-tellers of the market-place have their share in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, together with the family of Sir Thopas, as Warton has shown. In Jusserand's *English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare* we may trace the fortunes of many of the old books of chivalry ; Mr. Firth, in his introduction to the *Pilgrim's Progress*, has made out the debt of Bunyan to Sir Bevis

of Southampton—one of the pleasantest of demonstrations, in a kind of science which is often horribly abused by dull people, but not on that account to be rejected.

The *Pilgrim's Progress* is one of the results of mediæval romance;¹ it has the sort of plan which saves even some of the dull romances from total failure, and is found in some of the best. It is the simplest thing in the world; scarcely to be called a plot—merely a journey with adventures. Yet what more is wanted to give the romancer his opportunity? It is one of the things that never grow old, from Theseus and Jason to Sir Percival, and so on to the *Pilgrim's Progress* and so to modern examples, which anyone may think of for himself. *Rob Roy* has it. The second part of *Rob Roy*, the Highland adventures and Bailie Nicol Jarvie, have generally rather eclipsed the first part, but not so as to spoil the impression of Francis Osbaldistone's journey northward, with the accompaniment of "Mr. Campbell"—surely one of the best things in the whole of Scott for suspense and gradual deepening of interest.

Here I come to perilous ground, and I ask for sympathy. I have known about it all along, and so far I have succeeded in evading that particular risk. But now I come, to use the old ambiguous phrase, "into the danger" of Stevenson's *Essay on Romance*. The danger is twofold; first, when one thinks of what Stevenson has written, it is more difficult than ever to have ideas of one's own; but again he speaks rather

¹ "The Scriptures, thought I, what are they? A dead letter, a little ink and paper, of three or four shillings worth. Give me a ballad, a newsbook, George on horseback or Bevis of Southampton, give me some book that teaches curious arts, that tells of old fables; but for the holy Scriptures I cared not."

slightingly of the art of Scott, and ends not quite generously with a note of depreciation—a mistake, surely, in his own art. Of course Stevenson is very far from the enemies of Scott—from those who see no more in him than Peacock saw, or Mark Twain, with his philosophical proof that all the vanity of Southern chivalry—that is, of the Southern States in America—is attributable to *Ivanhoe*. And it can hardly be said that Stevenson's criticism of the one particular passage in *Guy Mannering* is unreasonable or unjustified, as far as it goes. But it gives a wrong impression, and the conclusion—Scott “an idle child”—is a failure of critical judgment. There is every kind of interest and every variety of art in Scott. There is the machinery of the ordinary historical novel so easily imitated by G. P. R. James and many others in all the tongues of Europe, so hopelessly antiquated now. One remembers the story of Niebuhr; how when he was on his death-bed he had Fenimore Cooper recommended to him for diversion, and tried him, and then asked for Josephus instead. And there is the adventure which is of quite a different sort from the antiquarian furniture and the conventional dialogue—adventures like those of which I have spoken in *Rob Roy*—like that of Sir Dugald Dalgetty in his escape from Inverary, or Everard in *Woodstock*, when he is caught in the dark and held down with the sword-point pricking at his throat. I have cause to remember that, because it is the first thing of Scott's that I remember; the book was being read aloud, and it seemed to me that it would be worth looking into. There is the admirable plot of the *Talisman*, a story which does not bring into play any of the comic genius of the author, and so attains a different kind of success from the richer books like *Old*

Mortality and the *Heart of Midlothian*, *Guy Mannering*, and the *Fair Maid of Perth*, where there are interests woven into romance—interests of character and conversation—which are not, properly speaking, romantic at all—the humours of Dandie Dinmont and Cuddie Headrigg.

Quite unlike the diffuse historical manner of much of *Waverley* and *Kenilworth* and *Quentin Durward*, there is the form, or rather many forms, of short story: *Wandering Willie's Tale* in *Redgauntlet*—*The Highland Widow*—*The Two Drovers*: these last bringing in a tragic element of mistake and misunderstanding with more effect than any of the longer novels. And in verse there is the same enormous variety—between the plain straightforward narrative of the *Lady of the Lake* and the lyrical mystery of *County Guy* and some other of the shorter pieces. All which goes to prove what needs no particular proof, that Romance means almost everything—from the two horsemen riding together at the beginning of the historical novel, or from the pasteboard Moors of the puppet-show, to the spell of the enchanted ground, the music of dreams and shadows.

ADDITIONAL NOTE

The following passage from the *Citizen of the World* gives a glimpse of a romantic school not now very clearly remembered :

“ I was going to expose his mistakes when it was insisted that I had nothing of the true Eastern manner in my delivery. ‘ This gentleman’s conversation,’ said one of the ladies who was a great reader, ‘ is like our own—mere chit-chat and common sense ; there is nothing like sense in the true Eastern style, where nothing more is required but sublimity. Oh ! for a history of Aboulfaouris the

grand voyager, of genii, magicians, rocks, bags of bullets, giants and enchanters, where all is great, obscure, magnificent, and unintelligible.' 'I have written many a sheet of Eastern tale myself,' interrupts the author, 'and I defy the severest critic to say but that I have stuck close to the true manner. I have compared a lady's chin to the snow upon the mountains of Banek ; a soldier's sword to the clouds that obscure the face of heaven. If riches are mentioned, I compare them to the flocks that graze the verdant Tefflis ; if poverty, to the mists that veil the brow of Mount Baku. I have used *thee* and *thou* upon all occasions ; I have described fallen stars and splitting mountains, not forgetting the little houris who make a pretty figure in every description. But you shall hear how I generally begin : " Eben-benbolo who was the son of Ban, was born on the foggy summits of Benderabassi. His beard was whiter than the feathers which veil the breast of the penguin ; his eyes were like the eyes of doves when washed by the dews of the morning ; his hair, which hung like the willow weeping over the glossy stream, was so beautiful that it seemed to reflect its own brightness, and his feet were as the feet of a wild deer which fleeth to the tops of the mountains." There, there is the true Eastern taste for you ; every advance made towards sense is only a deviation from sound. Eastern tales should always be sonorous, lofty, musical, and unmeaning.' " Goldsmith, *Citizen of the World*, Letter XXXIII.

XXXVIII

ON THE VALUE OF THE TERMS "CLASSICAL" AND "ROMANTIC" AS APPLIED TO LITERATURE.

THE technical terms "classical" and "romantic" have never had so much vogue in England as in Germany and France. We made the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century without the exaggerations and extremes which the English observer notices in the literature, as in the politics of less fortunate nations on the Continent. Yet we too had our revolt against ancient established authority in literature; it was not without its confused noise and shoutings. There was a great battle of the books all over Europe at the beginning of this century, and every reader of books, ever since, has compulsion laid on him to know something about the rights and wrongs of the contest. One can hardly open a newspaper without finding evidence that there is or once was a Romantic School in the world—were it only in this point, that newspapers, in defiance of every classical code, use the name *Tragedy* exclusively for the bloodshed which they delight in reproducing *coram populo*. The modern journalistic tragedy—"Tragedy in Camberwell" (or Euston Square, or wherever it may be)—belongs to the school of Victor Hugo rather than Sophocles.

The terms "classical" and "romantic" were used, in France especially, to denote two antagonistic parties.

Whatever the truth may be about "classical" and "romantic," it may be fairly presumed that they do *not* indicate mutually exclusive camps; that it is not, now, a question of war to the death, as in the days of 1830, when Théophile Gautier put on his red waistcoat—when to have romantic views on the subject of rhyme and phraseology might prejudice a man with his relations, even alter a will. We, nowadays, claim the right to circulate between the two camps—between the Versailles of Louis XIV. on the one side and "Notre Dame de Paris" on the other. We will read Boileau if we please, and *Rasselas*, and Congreve's *Mourning Bride*. We will have no Roman Index in our Republic of letters.

Here a misgiving arises. Do you really want to read Congreve's *Mourning Bride*? or Ambrose Philips's *Distrest Mother*? Is it not the case that all your reading, from Grimm and *Mother Goose* to the *Scalp Hunters* and the *Headless Horseman*, from the *Mysteries of Paris* to the *Ring and the Book*, is all but exclusively romantic: with perhaps an occasional page of Horace scanned in some conscientious moment—a halfpenny worth of classical bread to an intolerable deal of romantic sack. Here and there may be found a rare spirit who from his school days has by preference read—for his serious reading, at any rate—the great masters of antithesis and rhetoric, and strong understanding. But the majority of us, it may be guessed, have failed to resist the course of the stars and the dial—have not renounced our birthright as Macaulay did, a profane person who kept his Gibbon and his Horace Walpole, but refused to listen to Carlyle, Ruskin, or Tennyson.

(He made some exceptions—he read the works of Hallam.) We are all of us impartial; but we vote with the Romantics. We have no prejudice against bag-wigs or shoe buckles, but they are not in fashion just now.

So we get to this position: that while we have no dislike of the classical school of literature, no such hatred as was entertained by the French romantic school of 1830 towards the Conservative tradition; still, on the whole, the great mass of our reading has been romantic. We incline to think that romantic works—e.g. *Sartor Resartus* and the *Stones of Venice*—have more weight with us, are nearer to us, than Johnson's *London* or Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion*.

It is time, however, to look at the matter with somewhat greater exactness. For, after all, though we may be content with the name "romantic" for the works of most of the nineteenth-century authors whom we admire, from the author of the *Ancient Mariner* to the author of *Treasure Island*, and even for such old writers as the inventor of Caliban and Ariel, yet we know very well that it is really a very vague term, and that "classical" is equally vague and may be claimed by Lucretius, Virgil and Milton in another sense than that which makes it applicable to Pope or Johnson.

The conclusion one is almost irresistibly led to adopt is that the terms are used each of them in two wholly different ways.

"Classical" is used to denote the eighteenth-century modish literature—prim, moderate, whiggish and priggish.

"Romantic" denotes the literature of enthusiasm, mysticism, freedom.

Let us have examples.

First, on the classical side, appears Soame Jenyns with an essay on Virtue :

Thousands of suns beyond each other blaze,
Orbs roll o'er orbs and glow with mutual rays ;
Each is a world where, form'd with wond'rous art,
Unnumbered species live thro' every part :
In ev'ry tract of ocean, earth, and skies,
Myriads of creatures still successive rise ;
Scarce buds a leaf or springs the vilest weed
But little flocks upon its verdure feed.

Etc., etc.

That sort of poetry at one time was called classical. It belongs to the great school which held Europe under its authority in the eighteenth century ; called, by the French romanticists, *grisâtre* or grey. In it everything is rounded, smooth and moderate ; there are no loose ends or raw edges. Enthusiasm is strictly excluded, as unbecoming.

Now for something flamboyant :

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named Night,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule—
From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,
Out of Space—out of Time.

Bottomless vales and boundless floods,
And chasms, and caves, and Titan woods,
With forms that no man can discover
For the dews that drip all over ;
Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore ;
Seas that restlessly aspire,
Surging, unto skies of fire ;

Lakes that endlessly outspread
Their lone waters—lone and dead,
Their still waters—still and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily.

The piece from which these lines came is called *Dreamland*, and *Dreamland* is the great conquest and discovery of the romantic school in modern literature.

These two quotations—from Soame Jenyns and from Poe—may be taken as fairly representing on the whole two great tendencies or schools of literature. When one calls the first piece “classical” and the second “romantic,” it will probably be felt that the epithets are rightly used.

It is after this that the difficulty begins. Some authors wish to divide all literature and art between these two parties. If you are not classical, you must be romantic; there is no third party for you to join. If you try to form a school of your own, you will be told that this very effort at independence is itself pure romanticism.

Let us see how this works out. Obviously there is something more in this theory than the mere distinction, obvious to everyone, between the pomp of Soame Jenyns and the somnambulism of Poe. You can't make these two into leaders of parties. Even if you get Dryden to sit below Soame Jenyns, like Pitt and Addington; even if along with Poe you find all the heroes of the moonlit woodlands of romance, Dr. Faustus himself among them, there will remain vast tracts of literature unrepresented.

If all art and poetry is to be divided into classical and romantic, it seems a simple thing enough to begin the catalogue by reckoning the Greek authors as classical.

That looks a safe proceeding. Then it will follow that this passage from Pindar is classical :

Then whosoever have been of good courage to the abiding stedfast thrice on either side of death and have refrained their souls from all iniquity, travel the road of Zeus unto the tower of Kronos: there round the islands of the blest the ocean breezes blow, and golden flowers are glowing, some from the land on trees of splendour, and some the water feedeth, with wreaths whereof they entwine their hands: so ordereth Rhadamanthos' just decree, whom at his own right hand hath ever the father Kronos, husband of Rhea, throned above all worlds.

Peleus and Kadmos are counted of that company; and the mother of Achilles, when her prayer had moved the heart of Zeus, bare thither her son, even him who overthrew Hector, Troy's unbending invincible pillar, even him who gave Kyknos to death and the Ethiop son of the morning.

Imagine the frame of mind of an eighteenth-century critic on being asked to accept this as classical.

Or take a specimen from Aristophanes, in " whose incomparable genius," to use the words of another poet about him, " the highest qualities of Rabelais were fused and harmonized with the supremest gifts of Shelley " :

It was Chaos and Night at the first, and the blackness of
darkness, and hell's broad border,
Earth was not nor air neither heaven when in depths of the
womb of the dark without order
First thing first-born of the black-plumed Night was a wind
egg hatched in her bosom,
Whence timely with seasons revolving again sweet Love
burst out as a blossom,
Gold wings glittering forth of his back, like whirlwinds
gustily turning,
He after his wedlock with Chaos, whose wings are of darkness,
in hell broad burning,
For his nestlings begat him the race of us first, and upraised
us to light new lighted,

And before this was not the race of the Gods, until all things by Love were united ;
And of kind united with kind in communion of nature the sky and the sea are
Brought forth and the earth, and the race of the Gods everlasting and blest. So that we are
Far away the most ancient of all things blest. And that we are of Love's generation
There are manifest manifold signs. We have wings, and with us have the Loves habitation ;
And manifold fair young folk that forswore Love once, ere the bloom of them ended,
Have the men that pursued and desired them subdued, by the help of us only befriended,
With such baits as a quail, a flamingo, a goose, or a cock's comb staring and splendid.

Compared with this great master of contradictions and surprises, the German Romantic School looks as respectable as Mrs. Hannah More.

If one listened to the polemical advocate of Romanticism one would imagine that to be classical was to exclude from literature all deep passion, all fantasy, all communication with the blue heaven. Classicalism—if the Greek poets were classical, which is a modest assumption to make—means anything but this. It means the adventures of Ulysses with Polyphemus and the Sirens, and in the land of Phæacia and in the land of the dead. It means the self-devotion and courage of Prometheus, one soul against all the Universe ; for Greece has its Titans as well as its Olympians, and they are the fathers of the Gods of the North and of Hamlet. It means the soul's tragedy of Ajax : the pathos of Alcestis.

If romantic art has a monopoly of what is grotesque and weird, what are we to say of the Sphinx and the Harpies and the three old wives with one eye and one

tooth between them ? Mephistopheles, a romantic devil, finds all his ideas upset in the classical Walpurgis Night in the second part of *Faust*, when he gets among the classical Empusas and Camias, in the upper valley of the Peneus :

I fancied no one knew me here,
Yet find relations—that's severe !
The old old tale—go where you will,
From Haz to Hellas, kinsfolk still !

The difference between true classical poetry and the poetry of modern Europe is not so marked or striking as the difference between Soame Jenyns and Poe.

The difference consists rather in the weaknesses of each than in their essence. Greek art undoubtedly has a self-restraint, a simplicity and avoidance of excess, which is not found in English poetry. It is characteristic of the Greek view of art that Aristotle should find fault with the Homeric poems on account of their length. They offended to some extent the Greek sense of proportion and compass. They were too vast to be taken in at a glance.

The plays of Shakespeare are, most of them, carefully constructed, as carefully as any Greek tragedy, but one feels that Shakespeare has had to overcome a temptation to laxity of construction. With the slightest carelessness his plays might have turned out mere dramatised stories : in some of them, for instance in the *Winter's Tale*, the romance gets the better of the drama.

Almost all modern poetry has, in contradistinction to Greek poetry, a love for what is vague and distant and beyond the horizon. This tendency of course makes itself specially obvious in the writers of the romantic

schools properly so called. But it is to be found in all the great modern masters. When Romeo calls out :

Wert thou as far
As that vast shore washed by the furthest sea,
I would adventure for such merchandise—

we recognise something un-Hellenic—the modern Crusading romantic passion for things remote, at the back of the world.

That perhaps is the chief distinction between modern and ancient poetry. The hero of the *Odyssey* after all his romantic wanderings comes back to his rocky island : modern heroes, in one way or another, are adventurers, like those who entered on the quest for the Grail, or like the discoverers of America. Everywhere in modern poetry, from Dante to Browning, one meets this reverence for those who press forward into Terra Incognita, and this is almost wholly alien to ancient classical art.

There is one thing which does *not* constitute the difference between classical and romantic poetry. It is not true to say that classical poetry has a greater care for the outward form than romantic poetry has. There is a certain excuse for this view in the caprices to be found in times of transition and revolt, but the Romantic Movement, wherever it has had any real worth as in France, has been a movement not hostile to the form of literature. How could it be, when to be a romantic poet is to cherish a burning devotion to the ideal of beauty ? The English and French Romanticists broke the rules of Pope and Boileau that they might bring in new ones.

The French Romanticists who were jeered at as barbarians for breaking the laws of the *cæsura* have proved conclusively and scientifically that their antagonists, the men in wigs as they called them, were wholly

ignorant of the true beauties of rhythm and rhyme. There are not many critics nowadays who advocate a return to the Popish supremacy, or it must be worth while to show that *Christabel* is as regular, metrically, as the *Rape of the Lock*. Mr. Mark Pattison, curiously, once indulged in carplings against those poets who reject the heroic couplet and go back to Elizabethan irregularity. This is as rational as objecting to the music at a concert because it is not cut into lengths like the hymn tunes.

The term Romantic is good enough to denote an imaginative literature which, like that of modern Europe, grew up out of a revival of admiration for medieval things and properties—in the theatrical as well as the metaphysical sense of the word property. The Renaissance of the fifteenth century—if there was a Renaissance, and if it happened in the fifteenth century—came out of a re-discovery of Greece. The Renaissance of the end of the eighteenth century came out of a re-discovery of the ages called Dark and Middle. The grave of past ages was opened, and there was the Emperor Charlemagne sitting, the hero of old forgotten contests, a warning and an inspiration. Some explorers went even beyond Charlemagne. The Koran of the new poetical religion purported to come from the desert of Morven, out of the remotest memories of a melancholy race. The prophet's name was Ossian, his other name was Macpherson, and he took captive the most notable minds of that age. That he should have numbered both Napoleon and Goethe among his admirers is no small testimony to the power of the West Highland seer.

The charm of things medieval consisted at first to a great extent in their novelty and therefore, of course,

some of their charm has disappeared for us. There were some authors—the author of *Sintram and Undine* was one of them—who never wearied of tournaments, of knights in bright armour mounted on horses as bright and as intelligent as their riders. Victor Hugo, another sort of poet than La Motte Fouqué, was not to be disillusioned of his thorough confidence in the donjon-keep and the oubliette, and had a liking for old armour (see *Eviradnus*). It is certainly strange that the eighteenth century should have ignored not only the virtues of Roland and Oliver but also their spectacular value. But the charm of the Middle Ages and of medieval ideals will survive the taste for such pageantry, for Rhenish castles and tournaments.

What one may justly call the romantic character of the Middle Ages comes from their combination of two distinct elements ; both of which appear again in the romantic authors of the nineteenth century and in all authors—such, for instance, as Spenser—who have an affinity to the “romantic” ideas.

The Middle Ages were a time of perpetual tumult and strife—strife of ideas as well as of material forces. The medieval contradictions are repeated in all authors of the Romantic School. The contradictions come from the presence of some great overmastering idea in a mind or character insufficiently educated, too weak for the inspiration which fills it. All medieval art is the straining of barbarous souls after a heaven which they cannot imagine and for which they are unfit. The Crusader—a murdering Gothic barbarian engaged in the search for Eternal Life—is the representative man of the Middle Ages. The romantic poets of the nineteenth century resemble this medieval hero, first in their general hostility to the conventions of society,

their contempt of the prosaic and bourgeois virtues ; secondly in their subjection to vague and shadowy ideas, their aspirations for something on the other side of the world. Romantic art is individualistic, in the importance it gives to the feelings and caprices of its heroes, over against the prescribed rules of orderly society. Romantic poetry believes in freedom. On the other hand the caprice of the individual is in Romantic art corrected by the influence of some great Crusading movement. He is never a mere barbarian. Childe Harold and his counterparts in Byron's works are not mere outlaws. They fight for some cause—vaguely apprehended it may be—some revolutionary doctrine in which they place their hope, such as it is, for the regeneration of the world.

Discontent with eighteenth-century manners and conventionalities led naturally to admiration for the ages in which on the one hand the individual had more fun, and on the other hand the ideas which inspired society were more inspiring, more lively, though society was less coherent and stable.

Rousseau is the father of modern Romantic poetry : a Crusader raised to the second power—with all the ferocity of his original, all the religious enthusiasm, and in addition, a sentimentality born of egoistic reflection. The Crusader's selfishness is direct and honest ; that of the Romantic author is sophisticated.

XXXIX

THE HUMANIST IDEAL

WHEN I chose this subject, or perhaps I should rather say the title of this discourse, I did not know that it was to be delivered in the Divinity School. I might have found another text, another title, so as not to offend any local genius, Lares or Penates. The religion of the household gods is not of to-day nor yesterday, and the spirit of this place was once unfriendly to the humanists, or at any rate the humanists thought so, and expressed their ideal in terms of strong objection to this School. Look at the two pulpits here opposing one another ; those are the engines and artillery of the old fashion, the disputations in the Schools, to which the leaders of the revival of learning set themselves in antagonism, both for the sake of Science which the Schoolmen had broken up with their distinctions and minute analysis, their "vermiculate questions," and for the sake of the fine art of literature ; the humanists had to rescue the truth of scholarship from the web of allegorical interpretation which the Dark Ages had wound about Virgil, Ovid, and the Bible.

It is not my purpose to define the humanities ; rather otherwise, to show in a few examples how hard

or even impossible it is to define the humanists' ideal so as to include all its manifestations. But it is easy to see that it often defines itself, though not logically, by contrast with the old fashions of School disputes and tropological commentary, of everything "Gothic," whether in architecture or poetry, everything after the heart of the *Obscurorum Virorum*. Proofs are ready to hand, in those Epistles of theirs, in Erasmus his *Praise of Folly*, in Rabelais, in Tyndale. A famous Oxford man, Duns Scotus, lent his name to the party most despised and execrated at the revival of learning : Scotists, children of darkness. The massacre of his books in Oxford in 1537 was one of the patent triumphs of the new light.

The wonderful group of buildings in which we meet is a record and an image of the humanist ideal more noble and more enduring than the rage of the reformers. Happily in Oxford, though the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are often in sharp contrast, the new fashion has generally spared the old ; so we have here the Divinity School of the fifteenth century unimpaired and fresh in the beauty of its age ; and fronting it on the other side of the quadrangle the Tower of the Five Orders, a curiosity of learning ; the five classical orders of architecture, in stages one above the other, obviously with a didactic aim ; the learned King James duly presiding over them and their edification. To the north Christopher Wren with his Theatre, to the south James Gibbs—Gibbs Scotus—with his Dome, have built the temples of the humanities ; different from the old fashion of the Divinity School, but not refuting or cancelling it ; free from the pedantry of the Five Orders. Even so, Bacon in the *Advancement of Learning*, like Erasmus and More before him, escapes from the

vanities of the Renaissance and leaves behind him, as unsubstantial shadows and empty forms, both the rhetoric of the Ciceronians and the minute distinctions of the Schoolmen. The Humanist Ideal—how shall we define it? Can we do better than the helpless victims of Socrates at the beginning of their dialogues? If we cannot define, at least we may say where the idea is to be found: it is in the *Advancement of Learning*, in the Sheldonian Theatre and the Radcliffe Dome.

Petrarch is often taken as the first of the humanists. There is another before him. One of the first and clearest professions of faith in the advancement of learning is Dante's in the voyage of Ulysses—which is none the less Dante's own faith, though he knows the danger, even the certain doom, of the voyager who leaves the Old World behind. Dante knew (from Boethius, if he had not discovered it for himself) that all light is from Heaven. We might write in his margin not only the well-known words of Robert Burns, but the older phrase from the Elizabethan song-book:

Though Fate frowned
And now drowned
They in sorrow dwell,

It was the purest light from Heaven for whose fair
love they fell.

Do you believe that Dante is speaking only dramatically and not for himself in the person of Ulysses?

Consider the seed from which you are sprung: you were not made to live as the brutes live, but to follow virtue and knowledge.

It is all in that, the Humanist Ideal:

Considerate la vostra semenza :
Still at the worst we are the sons of men

But the simplicity and sincerity of this has been corrupted and broken up into many heresies ; of some of these I wish to speak.

The most prevalent and the most dangerous nowadays is the division between literature and science. This is comparatively new. The older humanists agreed with the Middle Ages and the Ancients in their interpretation of the Liberal Arts. The Liberal Arts are Sciences ; the terms *artes liberales*, *scientiæ liberales*, *artes ingenuæ* are synonymous. The main distinction of studies is not between literature and science, but between studies for the sake of knowledge and studies for some other end. The humanist ideal of studies is to be taken, surely, in its largest and most generous expression. All companions of Pantagruel know where to find it, fully set out in the education of Gargantua, more compendiously in the letter addressed by that king to his son (dated from Utopia, the seventeenth day of the month of March) where the king tells the story of the rescue of learning in his own lifetime since the days of his youth :

For that time was darksome, obscured with clouds of ignorance, and savouring a little of the infelicity and calamity of the Goths, who had, wherever they set footing, destroyed all good literature, which in my age hath by the divine goodness been restored unto its former light and dignity, and that with such amendment and increase of knowledge that now hardly should I be admitted unto the first form of the little grammar-school boys.

He proceeds to lay down rules of study for Pantagruel, his son :

I intend, and will have it so, that thou learn the languages perfectly ; first of all the Greek, as Quintilian will have it ; secondly the Latin ; and the Hebrew for the Holy Scripture sake ; and then the Chaldee and Arabic likewise ;

and that thou frame thy style in Greek in imitation of Plato, and for the Latin, after Cicero. Let there be no history which thou shalt not have ready in thy memory ; unto the prosecuting of which designs, books of cosmography will be very conducive, and help thee much. Of the liberal arts of geometry, arithmetic and music, I gave thee some taste when thou wert yet little, and not above five or six years old. Proceed further in them, and learn the remainder if thou canst. As for astronomy, study all the rules thereof. Let pass, nevertheless, the divining and judicial astrology, and the art of Lullius, as being nothing else but plain abuses and vanities. As for the civil law, of that I would have thee know the texts by heart, and then to confer them with philosophy.

Now in matter of the knowledge of the works of Nature, I would have thee study that exactly ; that so there be no sea, river or fountain, of which thou dost not know the fishes ; all the fowls of the air ; all the several kinds of shrubs and trees, whether in forest or orchards ; all the sorts of herbs and flowers that grow upon the ground ; all the various metals that are hid within the bowels of the earth ; together with all the diversity of precious stones that are to be seen in the orient and south parts of the world. Let nothing of all these be hidden from thee. Then fall not most carefully to peruse the books of the Greek, Arabian and Latin physicians, not despising the Talmudists and Cabalists ; and by frequent anatomies get thee the perfect knowledge of that otherworld called the microcosm, which is man. And at some of the hours of the day apply thy mind to the study of the Holy Scriptures ; first in Greek, the New Testament, with the Epistles of the Apostles ; and then the Old Testament, in Hebrew. In brief let me see thee an abyss and bottomless pit of knowledge : for from henceforward as thou growest great and becomest a man, thou must part from this tranquillity and rest of study ; thou must learn chivalry, warfare and the exercises of the field, the better thereby to defend my house and our friends, and to succour and protect them at all their needs, against the invasion and assaults of evil doers.

There is more than this, and it is all good reading whether in the French original or as here, in the language

of Sir Thomas Urquhart ; full of the humanities and the fresh air of the new season :

What shall I say ? the very women and children have aspired to this praise and celestial manna of good learning.

The same full rich doctrine as was described for Pantagruel is recommended in Milton's letter on Education. The pupils of his Academy end their studies, and are allowed to begin to write, when they are "fraught with an universal insight into things." I remember listening to an essay read by Mr. Firth on Rabelais and Milton compared with regard to Education. I do not think it has ever been printed ; I still think it ought to be. In the meantime, "*Je prends mon bien où je le trouve*" ; no wise lecturer will ever invent when he can borrow, and I follow the Regius Professor of History in offering you for comparison the letter of Gargantua to his son and the letter of Milton to Mr. Samuel Hartlib.

There is one curious difference ; both Rabelais and Milton write in correction of faults and abuses, defective theory and practice. But whereas Rabelais censures and castigates the old lazy medieval customs, Milton finds fault with the time spent in Latin and Greek to the exclusion of substantial knowledge. He stands for the true comprehensive humanist ideal, in place of the limited study of the tongues, which itself is one of the results of humanism—of the humanities taken too strictly and exclusively :

We do amiss to spend seven or eight years merely in scraping together so much miserable Latin and Greek as might be learned otherwise easily and delightfully in one year. . . . A preposterous exaction, forcing the empty wits of children to compose themes, verses, and orations, which are the acts of ripest judgment and the final work of a head

filled by long reading and observing, with elegant maxims, and copious invention. These are not matters to be wrung from poor striplings.

Here Milton agrees with Bacon ; the *Advancement of Learning* is in danger of the Schoolmen on the one hand, the " delicate learning " of the Ciceronians on the other :

For men began to hunt more after words than matter, more after the choiceness of the phrase and the round and clear composition of the sentence, and the sweet falling of the clauses, and the varying and illustration of their works with tropes and figures, than after the weight of matter, worth of subject, soundness of argument, life of invention, or depth of judgment. Then grew the flowing and watery vein of Osorius, the Portugal Bishop to be in price.

So the humanist ideal contradicts itself, or breaks into factions. The " renovation and new spring " (which is Bacon's happier phrase for what we call the Renaissance, or at Cambridge, the Renascence)—the renovation and new spring of knowledge took various forms according to the varieties of the human understanding in which it declared itself. One form was this of delicate learning, as Bacon calls it ; of " vain affectations " ; accomplished style with nothing of importance to convey.

A variation or imperfect form of the humanist ideal, closely related to the delicate learning of the Latin stylists, is the contempt for the modern languages, and especially for their forms of verse. " The gewgaw fetters of rhyme, invented by the monks to deceive the people " ; that is a burlesque phrase from Cobbett's speech in the *Rejected Addresses* ; it might pass well enough for a summary of Ascham's real opinion about rhyme in *The Schoolmaster*. Rhyme is barbarous, derived from Huns and Gothians. Here again we find

Bacon opposed to the abstract narrow judgment of the too purely classical scholars: against "the servile expressing antiquity in an unlike and an unfit subject." "In modern languages it seemeth to me as free to make new measures of verses as of dances."

And here again some strange contradictions may be found. Gullio, the foolish young man, the admirer of Shakespeare in the *Return from Parnassus*, knows at least the name of Ronsard, and Amoretto also knows him, another specimen of youthful vanity who is all for the newest things in French, Italian, Spanish. Ronsard, along with Shakespeare, is one of the idols of conceited youth; Ronsard, who came afterwards to be blamed with equal injustice as a pedantic scholar, overloading the genius of French poetry with Pindarisms; Ronsard, whose sonnet on the *Iliad*—addressing himself to read the *Iliad* through in three days—is an abstract of the quintessence of humanism—a song of devotion to the Muses, in no mere figurative or conventional sense:

Je veuz lire en trois jours *l'Iliade* d'Homère.

But the depreciation of Ronsard need not give us much concern; his fame is not in danger. It may be allowed me here to salute two names of those who have praised him in England, Andrew Lang and George Wyndham.

Along with the scholarly contempt for modern verse it is not surprising to find a dislike of medieval romance. Gabriel Harvey, who encouraged the English poets to imitate Greek or Latin forms of verse, did his best to turn Spenser away from the *Faerie Queene*. About the same time in Italy there was endless debate on the merits and principles of epic and romance, summed up,

for one side, in the opinion of the *Accademia della Crusca*, that "epic" means an epic which cannot be read, and "romance" means an epic which can. *Già s'è risposto, che eroico e romanzo è tutt'uno, e s'intende romanzo per un eroico allegro, ed eroico per uno eroico noioso e spiacevole.* Tasso, though in this Battle of the Books he was matched against Ariosto, was not the advocate of the pure classical ideal of epic; and on romance he said something quite as decisive and more urbane than this sentence of the *Crusca*. Some critics maintained that romance was a species unknown to Aristotle. Aristotle, says Tasso, knew the essence of poetry, and is not disabled if a new species of poetry arise after his time. Nor are the new species disabled, nor exempt from his authority, for being new.

Here we come to one of the greatest difficulties, the greatest schisms among the humanists. What is the authority of the Ancients?

The worst of every renovation and new spring of knowledge is that it puts ideas into people's heads who would not otherwise have been troublesome. The deadliest satire on the human race can hardly go further than that one verse of Tennyson in the *Holy Grail*: the King's judgment:

Lo, one hath seen, and all the blind will see!

The Renaissance brings along with it the danger of classical authority misinterpreted and misapplied: Aristotle and the Ancients, the *Poetics* of Julius Caesar Scaliger, Bossu on the Epic Poem, the Three Unities of Drama.

What is a classic? Is there any sense in which the term may be used without ambiguity?

The best answer, I think, is one of Goethe's conver-

sations with Eckermann, the upshot of which is that, if you like, you may say "classical" of any work which is good of its kind. The *Iliad* is classical; so is the *Nibelungenlied*. One thing Goethe is certain about (on this occasion at any rate)—that the opposition between classical and romantic has been overdone. It still survives as a formula, like those of Polonius. "The romantic revival," a convenient label in histories, is treated as if it were a scientific explanation. It ought to be looked into.

Byron notes the opposition of classical and romantic as a new thing in his time. He had read the essays of Stendhal, *Racine et Shakespeare*, in which the meaning of the terms classic and romantic is examined. The best-known point of Stendhal's is quoted by Pater in his essay on Romanticism. Every true poet, says Stendhal, for example Racine, is romantic while he is alive; when he is dead he is classical. There is a meaning in this, proper to France, which is lost in English. The opposition of classic and romantic there was a real thing, fought out bodily in the theatres: it was a debate about the forms of drama, in a country where the theatre was alive. A classical type of drama had been enormously successful, and was still productive, active, predominant in authority, when it was challenged by Victor Hugo and his companions. There was nothing like it in England, and the terms classic and romantic lost their meaning when transferred to this country. The good old-fashioned regular heroic couplets which provoked Keats were not really a dangerous reactionary force, even with Byron as their advocate, like the classical dramatists analysed by Stendhal and discomfited in the day of *Hernani*. The romantic movement in France made a real obvious outward

change in the life of the people, in the fashions of the theatre. For a victory like that of 1830, an historical event, an historical name like "romantic revolt" is not unsuitable. In England there is rivalry between new and old, but the issues are not clearly joined, much less fought out on a visible field with palpable instruments, and there is not the same reason for distinctive badges and liveries.

What is classical in English poetry? For one thing there is nothing like the classical drama of France. Strange enough, considering how the humanists in all countries talk similar things about the Unities and so forth. Will any members of this Association trouble themselves to inquire why there is no Racine in England? Possibly not: yet the question is not absolutely futile and senseless. Comparing English and French drama we see how a common ideal may fare differently in different countries through local accidents. The theory of classical drama was once important in the talk of English critics. Shakespeare knew all about it; he was a friend of Ben Jonson. They talked, and not many observed the Unities. In France there was the same kind of talk, and a similar neglect of the Unities, till quite late (years after the death of Shakespeare, when Ben Jonson was near his end) the Unities were suddenly discovered by a working dramatist, Corneille, and turned to good effect, to the creation of a new kind of drama, concentrated, intense. The Unities were effective in France because the French drama had proved itself, in practice, not very effective without them. Shakespeare, without them, had made wonderful theatrical patterns of his own, perfect, some of them, in form and symmetry. The French dramatists, such as Alexandre Hardy, doing without the Unities, had

not done anything very great. To Corneille the Unities, we may say, are not pedantic academic rules, but pieces of good advice helping him to brace his work better. How he thought of the rules, he has explained in his general discourses and particular reviews of the several plays in the collected edition (1660). His motive is not the scholarly ideal, following the Ancients ; it is the practical man's experiment.

One of the strange omissions in the life of the humanist ideal is the neglect of Greek tragedy. Every poet rushed to the epic poem ; the Athenian dramatists were left alone. Scholars read Greek plays, no doubt, but they hardly ever talked about them in the vernacular. Gascoigne's *Jocasta* is a translation of an Italian version of the *Phoenissae* of Euripides : after that I do not remember anything nearly related to Greek tragedy till Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus*, and that is not exactly a rendering of Sophocles.

But where else in English poetry is Sophocles even mentioned except in Dryden's prologue to *Oedipus* ? "Thundering Aeschylus" and Sophocles are indeed summoned by Jonson to do honour to Shakespeare ; on equal terms with Pacuvius, Accius, and "him of Cordova dead." Milton names Sophocles more than once, but conventionally and casually Mr. Hartlib is asked to take note that the *Trachiniae* is one of the tragedies which treat of household matters. Has any modern poet, except always Racine, studied Greek tragedy as Tasso and Milton studied Homer ? Where is Aeschylus among the critics and poets who impose the Ancients on the world ? Here he is, in Addison's *Spectator*, No. 357 :

"I cannot forbear, therefore, thinking that Sin and Death are as improper agents in a work of this nature,

as Strength and Necessity in one of the tragedies of Aeschylus, who represented these two persons nailing down Prometheus to a rock, for which he had been justly censured by the greatest critics."

In France does not Aeschylus count for more than in England with the general reader and playgoer? One remembers the *Eumenides* of Leconte de Lisle; and I once saw the *Persians* acted at the Théâtre Français; a noble song of triumph, for the victory of the Republic. A magnanimous thing, it seems to me, for in that great poem the defeated invaders are represented suffering in no ignoble way, with no reviling.

The romantic leaders in France were not against the Ancients: Alexandre Dumas found Sophocles a better craftsman for the stage than Voltaire in his *Oedipe*.

The dividing lines of Goth and Greek, barbarian and humanist, medieval and modern, classic and romantic, are never drawn as neatly as the diagrammatist would like. Dryden knows that Chaucer is really classical in spirit and in art, and that Ovid is false wit, too often, in comparison with Chaucer. Addison finds in *Chivy Chase* the unity and harmony which are wanting in modern little "Gothic" versifiers. And as for medieval and Renaissance art Oxford will testify again; in the staircase of the Hall of Christ Church, which looks like Henry VII. and really was put there in 1640, when Dr. Fell was Dean; or in the successful hypocrisy of the Codrington Library of All Souls—Gothic outside to answer the fifteenth-century chapel on the other side of the quadrangle; inside, the perfect image of the eighteenth century in dignity and grace, unequalled.

There never is any conclusion, when people meet and debate about the humanities: there is no particular

advice to be given here to the English Association in Oxford. The best has been said by the Master whom I have quoted already, in the inscription for his Abbey of Thelema :

FAY CE QUE VOUDRAS

“ Because men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies have naturally an instinct and spur that prompteth them unto virtuous actions and withdraws them from vice : which is called HONOUR.”

THE END.





